An Old Shropshire Oak

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AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK

VOL. IV.

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AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK

BY THE LATE

JOHN WOOD WARTER

AUTHOR OF 'THE SEABOARD AND THE DOWN'
ETC.

EDITED BY RICHARD GARNETT, LL.D.

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AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK.

Ὑπ' αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς περικαλλέϊ φηγῷ.

Iliad, E' 693.

The air that floated by me seemed to say,
'Write! thou wilt never have a better day.'
And so I did.

KEATS'S *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, Sept. 1816.

Pleraque eorum quæ retuli, quæque referam, parva forsitan et levia memoratu videri, non nescius sum.

TACIT. *Annal.* iv. c. 32.

Thus I entertain
The antiquarian humour, and am pleased
To skim along the surfaces of things,
Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours.

WORDSWORTH'S *Excursion*, p. 92.

Gravestones tell truth scarce forty years. Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks.

SIR T. BROWNE'S *Hydriotaphia, or Urn-burial*, c. v. vol. iii. 491. Ed. Wilkins.

A tree on which the host of dreams
Low murmur mystic things.

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON'S *Poems; Love's Sudden Growth*, p. 135.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE REIGN OF GEORGE THE SECOND.

Glories, like glow-worms, afar off shine bright,
But, took't to near, have neither heat nor light.
Duchess of Malfi, iv.

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in Beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of Nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.
SHAKSPEARE'S *Sonnets*, No. LX.

It were hard to determine whether Atheism and Infidelity amongst professed Protestants, or Superstition and Idolatry amongst the Papists, have more increased throughout this land in later years.—T. JACKSON'S *Works*, i. 218, folio.

As we have seen, George I. died suddenly on June 11. The news reached London on the 14th, and George II. was proclaimed the next day, then in the forty-fifth year of his age. The bearer of the news was no less a person than the celebrated Sir Robert Walpole, and he it was that presented Lord Townshend's dispatch to the new George at Richmond, where, at the time of his arrival, he was taking his after-dinner nap, and from which he never liked to be disturbed. On Sir Robert's breaking the matter to him, he is said to have exclaimed, '*Dat is one big lie!*' evidently doubting if the news could be true.

Within nine days the accession was proclaimed in the Old Town, and the news was soon brought to Hanwood; but it

seems to have occasioned little interest either in town or county. As for Shrewsbury itself, it, just at this time, was much busied in matters of Welsh cloths and flannels, and the little Welsh ponies (before spoken of in these pages) were seen to be constantly coming and going with their loads. It was one of these cloth-dealers from Montgomery which bought Miles Ford's pony, which he knew well.

It is quite worth the reader's while to consult our historians on this point, who will tell him how, up to 1649 on every Friday, and after that date on every Thursday, 'the central parts of the town were all life and bustle,' and how troops of hardy ponies, each with a halter of twisted straw and laden with two bales of cloth, poured into the market-place in the morning, driven by stout Welshmen in their country coats of blue cloth and striped linsey waistcoats,' quoting the lines from Dyer's 'Fleece,' which have been quoted before.

As my Talking Friend constantly referred to the visits of the Welshmen from Montgomery, Newtown, and Welshpool, and as he was well acquainted with many of them, who had drunk '*cwr dha*' under his branches, I will venture to give the following passage in full. The fathers of the eminent historians must have seen it all—and probably the writers themselves.

'After dinner, i.e. at two o'clock, the drapers, with their clerks and shearmen, assembled under the market-house and proceeded upstairs in seniority, having, by ancient usage, the right of pre-emption in that order. The market being over, drays were seen in all directions conveying the cloths to the several warehouses; and more than 600 pieces of web have been sold in a day. The whole was a ready-money business, and as the Welshmen left much of their cash behind them in exchange for malt, groceries, and other shop goods the loss of such a trade to the town may be easily conceived. The first blow levelled at the market may be dated from about the year 1790, when, or soon after, individuals, not members of the Drapers' Company, began to travel into the counties where these goods were made (Merionethshire and the vale of the Dee above Llangollen) and taught the farmers that

they might find a mart for their manufactures at home without the trouble and expense of a journey to the vales of Amwythig, "*ex illo retro fluere.*" About 1795 the market was most materially impaired, and almost ceased with the century. Till at length, in March 1803, the company relinquished the great room in which they had so long carried on their business; and, though much business in this branch is still carried on within our valley, the town has entirely lost the advantage which it derived from the weekly visits of the Cambrian farmers, which produced so much emolument to the drapers and raised so many families who now shine in the foremost ranks of our gentry.'

As the old homestead at Meole was a part and parcel of the old Drapers' Guild, my Talking Friend would have been ill-satisfied without this statement. He had many times seen droves of Welsh ponies, as many as twenty or thirty in number, passing onwards to Shrewsbury.

> Whom we know well
> The world's large spaces cannot parallel.

But to return to George II.

He, like his father, still preferred Hanover to England, and was always going backwards and forwards there whenever he could release himself from the cares of Parliament and the Court at home. As Walpole relates in his 'Reminiscences,' he spoke English correctly, but 'with a bluff Westphalian accent.' His sudden bursting out with '*Dat is one big lie!*' above mentioned, will not contradict this, for his Majesty spoke under some excitement, and he was hardly full awake, and was flurried by the sudden intelligence. He did not want courage, as was seen at Oudenarde, where he served as a volunteer, and was admitted to be a good and brave soldier by Eugène and Marlborough. Indeed, he never forgot that fight, but on high days and holydays wore the hat and coat he had on there. And the people smiled at his small vanities, and would call him humorously '*Dapper little George.*' And yet they never could separate *Sauerkraut* and sausages from Hanover—so says Thackeray.

He married Caroline of Anspach, as good a wife as ever

king was possessed of, and so far even eulogised by the author of the 'Four Georges,' though he is still the cynic in his account of her. Perhaps Lord Mahon's words will hardly be disputed: 'Her character was without a blemish, and her conduct always marked by judgment and good sense;' to which he adds: 'With the nation she was more popular than any other member of the family till George III.,' and this is saying much.

But there are drawbacks, and nothing can be more painful than the hollowness of the Court in those days, and all that has come to light since only darkens the sad picture. Thackeray, of course, takes hold of this: 'Show me some good person about that Court; find me, among those selfish courtiers, those dissolute, gay people, some one being that I can love and regard,' &c. Within—it is sixty years since—we have seen sad things in our own days, but we may doubt if the orgies of the fourth George's reign exceeded the melancholy spectacles which might have been seen now, or if the grade of principle was lower. And, worse than all, if report be square with the details we could wish to turn from, the bishops and the clergy under the Hanoverian Succession and in the times of the second George rustled in their cassocks on the backstairs of the ladies of the Court, as if there were no such thing as HOLY, but only political, ORDERS. It was time for a Wesley and a Whitefield to arise!

Still it is to be remembered that the Queen herself endeavoured to do what she could, although the world was bowed to '*in the house of Rimmon*,' and even if she loved dissipation and argument, leading some to suppose 'that her own faith was wavering. But no doubt,' continues Lord Mahon, 'can exist as to her discerning and most praiseworthy patronage of worth and learning in the Church: the most able and pious men were everywhere sought out and preferred, and the Episcopal Bench was graced by such men as Hare, Sherlock, and Butler. Even to her enemies she could show favour if they could show merit,' and did so.

Running in couples with the same low grade of principle is what Smollett says of Sir Robert Walpole: 'He perceived the bulk of mankind were actuated by a sordid thirst for

lucre, and had sagacity enough to convert the degeneracy of the times to his own advantage, and in this, and in this alone, he pervaded the whole superstructure of his subsequent Administration.' This is said with Smollett's one-sided view, though there is much truth in the words; and it cannot be wondered at that the King should say of him, 'Walpole can turn stones into gold!'

It is to be hoped that the historian above alluded to looked to the worst side of things when he stated that about this time England was infested with robbers, assassins, and incendiaries, the natural consequences of degeneracy, corruption, and the want of police in the interior government of the kingdom. 'This defect,' he says, 'in a great measure arose from an absurd notion that laws necessary to prevent those acts of cruelty, violence, and rapine would be incompatible with the liberty of British subjects; a notion that confounds all distinctions between liberty and brutal licentiousness, as if that freedom was desirable in the enjoyment of which people find no security for their lives or effects. The peculiar depravity of the times was visible even in the conduct of those who preyed upon the commonwealth. Thieves and robbers were now become more desperate and savage than ever they had appeared since mankind was civilised. In the exercise of their rapine they wounded, maimed, and even murdered the unhappy sufferers through a wantonness of barbarity. They circulated letters demanding sums of money from certain individuals on pain of reducing their houses to ashes and their families to ruin, and even set fire to the house of a rich merchant in Bristol who had refused to comply with their demand. The same species of villany was practised in different parts of the kingdom, so that the Government was obliged to interpose and offer a considerable reward for discovering the ruffians concerned in such execrable designs.'

It is to be hoped that this is overdrawn. If not, it is only to be compared with certain passages in Juvenal's 'Satires,' which every Shrewsbury boy heard applied to the worst of times by dear old Bishop Butler.

Still the fact is not to be denied, and Walpole himself could not rate the venality of those in office even too low, who

declared in their factious spirit, themselves all the while ready to be bought, what was reported to Jugurtha, 'OMNIA ROMÆ VENALIA!' Meanwhile everyone had a remedy for the prevalent evils of society, but no one seemed ready to begin at home, and what Mr. Pulteney said in a debate two or three years later was not only applicable to those days, but to many since then. He compared the Ministry to an empiric, and the Constitution of England to his patient. This pretender in physic (said he) being consulted by the distempered person, there were but two or three ways of treating his disease, and he was afraid that none of them would succeed. A vomit might throw him into convulsions that would occasion immediate death; a purge might bring on a diarrhœa that would carry him off in a short time; and he had been already bled so much and so often that he could bear it no longer. The unfortunate patient, shocked at this declaration, replies, 'Sir, you have always pretended to be a regular doctor, but now I find you are an arrant quack. I had an excellent constitution when I first fell into your hands, but you have quite destroyed it; and now I find I have no other chance of saving my life but by calling for the help of some regular physician.' Such, however, was not at hand, and party spirit ran high, and year after year there was great confusion between

Right and wrong,
Between whose endless jar justice resides.

On referring to my Talking Friend as to the state of things in the valley of the Rea, he seemed to think, as far as he could remember, that there was an advance in civilisation. In fact, he always maintained this, and added that 'it was only old oaks, far advanced, that could look back and report progress; as for elms and other trees they rarely stood a hundred years, and, of course, knew little; whereas he and his venerable father could speak of centuries, and after seeing what he had seen he still looked forwards in hope and with much confidence.' And the good old tree's hopes have long ago been realised, and with all its drawbacks a favourable report may be made of the valley, of its people, and of its charities.

Examples profit much; ten times in one
In persons full of note good deeds are done.

What is here said he illustrated by the name of Thomas Bright, a tanner of Shrewsbury, who left his estate at Astley, in the parish of St. Mary, after the demise of his wife and brother, to charitable purposes. From then not only the minister of Astley and the schools, but the poor of Atcham, have participated in his goodness, to say nothing of St. Chad's. His name reverted naturally to the Old Oak's habits, for the worthy man had to pass this way constantly to the tan-pits at Pontesford, which have been alluded to before in these pages.

Recollecting the inquiry into the public prisons made in the year 1731, and not before it was wanted, I bethought me to ask my Talking Friend about the treatment of prisoners in Shrewsbury and about the gaol there. His information was by no means satisfactory, and only showed the necessity of such a visitation as that of the philanthropic Howard and, in later days, of Mrs. Fry.

Modest doubt is called
The beacon of the wise, the text that searches
To the bottom of the worst.

The impression upon my Talking Friend's mind was that in early days all prisoners were looked upon as what the old Saxons called '*Nithings*,' literally good-for-nothings and incorrigibles, and as such they were treated, unless prisoners of war or under political attaint. Originally he thought that criminals were confined in the castle precinct, then in the gate-houses and towers on the bridges, and he reported how the people in early days spoke of a kind of dungeon under the Water Gate, with a sort of horror, as being worse than the worst.

As early as 1536 application had been made to the Corporation by the sheriff to have the county gaol within the town, but nothing was done. Indeed, it was not till the year 1705 that 'a gaol for the county was built at the back of Castle Street, behind the turning to School Lane,' so superseding that between the two castle gates. And thus matters

remained with small modifications or improvements till, as I suspect, the first visit of the benevolent Howard, which was in 1782. His report of the state of things could not be much worse, and the old term of allowing prisoners to 'rot' in a gaol is painfully and expressively true. The result of this visit was to stir up the magistrates, and an Act of Parliament was obtained for a new gaol in 1786 which was finished in 1793. Howard was again in Shrewsbury in 1788, and must have been delighted to see the building in progress, and pretty much after his own views and plans as suggested by Mr. Blackburn, and which was completed and carried out by Mr. Haycock. Over the gateway is a bust of Howard by Bacon, which every Shrewsbury boy knows well. Did we not pass that way for years on our way to the bathing-ground with old Jem Farlow; and did not he point out the pelicans to the younger boys in his charge, whilst the elders were far ahead, and undressing at the head of the 'GUT'—that grand current for a strong swimmer, and above the lawful ground? It was an infraction of all rules to bathe there, but Jem Farlow lagged purposely behind with the little boys to tell them about the pelicans, and

Courage mounteth with occasion,

and before he could catch us up we were half-way down the Barge Gutter. Poor Jem! there were worse men in the world than he was; and how he did shout out, 'Now for death or glory!' when the schools were in line!

A well-known face frequently passed up and down the road at this time, and attracted the notice of my Talking Friend. It turned out on inquiry to be the son of a well-known alderman of Shrewsbury—the Rev. William Adams, Vicar of St. Chad's. It appears that he had friends at Montgomery, and always chose this way, so fond was he of the valley and the stream, and the rising saddle of Pontesford Hill, and of the Stiperstones. Few better men have ever filled his place at St. Chad's, which he held for the space of forty-three years. His connection with the Old Town may be seen in our historians, and many pleasant notices of him in Boswell's 'Johnson.' It was at the Lodge, in Pembroke College,

Oxford, to which he was elected in his latter days (July 1775), where the doctor and he used to meet, and these were pleasant visits all, so kindly was the master, so attentive was his daughter. He survived Dr. Johnson about five years, and died at Gloucester, of which he was prebend, in 1789. He speaks of the master's tender treatment of him in a letter dated July 11, 1784, and Dr. Adams wrote to Boswell, Feb. 17, 1785, saying, 'His last visit was, I believe, to my home, which he left, after a stay of four or five days,' &c.

In the year 1733 Walpole's Excise Scheme created no small stir in the Old Town and throughout the county at large, and the cockade was mounted by several with this inscription upon it, 'Liberty, Property, and No Excise.' Many of the roystering Chirbury boys passed by the Old Oak shouting these words at the pitch of their voices, very drunk, and not knowing what they said. The Chirbury boys have been mentioned before, and they retained their character for bold and mischievous tricks—without vice—till the beginning of the present century. The late Captain Witts on his way to Lidles-Hayes found one of these worthies with his feet in a running stream. It was on a Saturday night, and on his inquiring why he chose that position got for an answer—preceded by a kick-up—'Master John, I have to sing the fare in the church to-morrow!' The worthy Chirbury boy, well primed with good ale, which was his fasting, had small fears of cold or of becoming, as Shakspeare says,

> As dire and meagre as an ague's fit.

It has been noted before that in the year 1734 Hanwood Churchyard was planted with yew-trees at the expense of Mr. Phillips, of Meole. They appear to like the red, sandy, and shoady soil, as they still continue to flourish. Looking at them, in the latter summer, with their dark robing of green and their beautiful berries, one cannot, or scarcely, apply the words in 'Madoc,' for this seems rather to be emblematic of the Resurrection and perpetual verdure :—

> Be not those,
> As is the black and melancholy yeugh,
> That strikes into the grave its baleful roots
> And prospers on the dead.

It was late in this year, November 18, that the Rev. Benjamin Wingfield was inducted Rector of Hanwood, a member of the old Shrewsbury and Onslow families, originally of Loughborough and Preston Brockhurst. His name is mentioned here as one who was much interested in the fortunes of the conspicuous 'young scholar' from the Shrewsbury Schools, who had recently (in 1730 I think) been elected a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, known afterwards as Demosthenes Taylor. Many conversations about him were heard under the branches of the Old Oak, which, as in after years and till the present century, was a sort of trysting-place for travellers. Indeed, my Talking Friend reported that he had often seen father and son trudging up the road on their way to Condover; for having friends at Arlescott they frequently passed this way instead of taking the more direct one. The father, it should be noted, was a barber of Shrewsbury, and used to attend Edward Owen, Esq., of Condover, in that capacity; and, no doubt, not only dressed his wigs, but brought the news of the borough with him. What was a barber without news? The schoolboy quotes his Terence, and he says at once, '*Tonstrina erat quædam*,' &c.

As he was well known in the valley, and as he was a Shrewsbury boy, it is fitting that a word or two should be said of this first-rate scholar.

His entry in St. Alkmund's Register stands thus: '1704. June 20. John, son of John Taylor, barber, and Anne, his wife, bapt.'

Such was the humble birth of this great scholar, and report says that on one of his father's visits to Condover, being asked by Mr. Owen about his son Jack, he replied, 'He could never get him to shave a townsman cleanly or to dress a wig, as he was everlastingly poring over his "dull books."' Similar remarks often repeated roused the attention of Mr. Owen, and as Shrewsbury School was so closely connected with St. John's, hither he kindly determined to send him, and there he graduated as B.A. 1724, M.A. 1728, and became fellow, as just said, in 1730.

Common report says that on his visits to his native town he was an acceptable guest at Condover, but that he lost the

favour of his kind host and friend because he would not drink a Jacobite toast on his bare knees, as was then no uncommon custom amongst the friends of the exiled family, of which, till a late date, there were many in the Old Town and county.

Whether the story be true or not, he now took up his residence in Cambridge, and was a scholar of mark there for many years, and officiated as Librarian and Registrar of the University. It is not necessary here to mention his various works, which will be found in the 'Anecdotes' by Mr. Bowyer and in the pleasant sketch derived from them in good Archdeacon Owen's pages. It may be enough to mention that his 'Lysias' was published in London 1739, and in 1740, when he took his LL.D., he read the celebrated *Commentarius ad Legem Decemviralem de inope debitore in partes dissecando*, showing that it was his property, and not the debtor himself, which was to be cut to pieces. It was published in 1742, in which year he was admitted of Doctors' Commons, but never appears to have practised as a lawyer. In the next year (1743) he published the well-known *Marmor Sandvicense* brought by the Earl of Sandwich from Athens, and in the same year *Orationes duæ, una Demosthenis contra Midiam, altera Lycurgi contra Leocratem*, &c.

In the year 1744, through the kindness of his patron, Lord Granville, who introduced him to the notice of Dr. John Thomas, the Bishop—as we pick up from what is called the introduction to the third volume of his 'Demosthenes'—he succeeded Dr. Reynolds as Chancellor of the Diocese of Lincoln. I do not think that the date of his entering holy orders is exactly known, for some time subsequent to this date he was busy on his edition of 'Demosthenes,' which he never lived to complete. The *third* volume just alluded to came out in the spring of 1748, the first being deferred in order that he might, with more leisure, complete the 'Prolegomena' and the 'Life.' But though the exact date of his entering holy orders may not be known we do know that in 1749 he printed a sermon; that in 1751 he succeeded Dr. Christopher Anstey in the rectory of Lawford, Essex, a St. John's living, which was the probable cause of his leaving the civil law for the Church; and in 1753 became Archdeacon of Buckingham. In

1755 he published his 'Elements of Civil Law,' which were the cause of the Warburtonian spleen, from papers drawn up for the use of the Marquis of Bath and his brother, who were placed under his care by Lord Granville, their maternal grandfather, and in 1757 he was made Canon Residentiary of St. Paul's. On this preferment he resigned his office of Registrar in the University in favour of his friend Mr. Halford, of Emmanuel, and took up his residence in London, where he still was engaged in his great work, which, as was before said, he never lived to complete. Other occupations no doubt took up his time, and, it has been hinted, love of ease. Many references, however, are made to his full attendance on his duties, and he was not a man to loll on a cushion. He lived till April 4 (or 14), 1766, and with medical care and attention might probably have lived on. Like many before and since he took to doctoring himself unwisely. His summers he used to spend in Shropshire, and rented the Curate's House at Edgemond, near Newport, year after year, so pursuing his studies.

The lamp that burns by night
Gives up his oil to send the world his light.

After all, the old Shrewsbury boy did not die rich, as was anticipated, but he did not forget his old home, and the place of his birth and bringing up :—

Cælumque
Aspicit, et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.

And so he left what money he had to endow an exhibition at St. John's for the Free Schools of the Old Town, and his valuable library for their use, where it remains to this day. Unhappily he left his MSS. to his friend and physician, Dr. Askew, with such of his printed books in which were his marginal notes, and of these the Doctor was avariciously exacting ; add to which he acted with great want of judgment in entrusting the mixed notes on Demosthenes to Reiske, who was jealous of our great scholar's fame, and printed them recklessly—ὅλῳ τῷ θυλάκῳ—'bran and meal together,' and then made invidious comments upon what Demosthenes Taylor would never have allowed to see the light.

What is called the Taylor MS. in the School Library has no reference whatever to the classical annotations above alluded to. It is a local document (much used by our historians) extending from 1372 to July 25, 1603. It was probably compiled by some of the Lyster family of Rowton Castle, and was given to Dr. Taylor, when Fellow of St. John's, by Richard Lyster, Esq., who, from having been so long member, went by the name of 'The Senator.'

In referring to Taylor's books which passed into the hands of Dr. Askew, the rare folio Terentianus Maurus, Mediolani, 1477, deserves mention. He gave four guineas for it out of the Harleian Collection. It was bought for twelve by Dr. Hunter on the sale of Askew's library, and was in the Hunterian Collection. Bowyer gave the following note in MS. written by Taylor himself: 'This is judged to be the only copy of this edition in England, if not in the whole world. If so, it is worth any money. Dr. Askew could find no copy in his travels over Europe, though he made it his earnest and particular search in every library which he had an opportunity of consulting.' It was probably the name of Taylor which induced Leonard Hotchkis, some time Fellow of St. John's, and a master of Shrewsbury School, to give his attention to the work of Terentianus Maurus. The book is by no means so rare as Dr. Taylor thought.

I conclude this little notice with an amusing anecdote. Taylor, as librarian, had to arrange and class the books given by George I. to the University of Cambridge, formerly belonging to Bishop Moore, and he states that, 'throwing the books into heaps for general divisions, he saw one whose title-page mentioned somewhat of *height* and another of *salt*; the first he cast amongst those of mensuration, the other to those of chemistry or cookery; that he was startled, when he came to examine them, to find that the first was Longinus' "De Sublimitate," and the other a theological discourse on the Salt of the World that good Christians ought to be seasoned with.' I can have no doubt but that dear old Bishop Butler enjoyed this much.

But whilst scholars are mentioned benefactors and chari-

table names are not to be passed by, and none have been more memorable, as connected with Shrewsbury, than those of the Drapers' Company—such as was Thomas Bowdlers, pursuant to whose will was founded the Bowdlers Charity School in 1724—Mayor of his town and alderman. This worthy and useful member of the body corporate, and great benefactor to St. Julian's, where he lies buried, was a frequent visitor, my Talking Friend said, at the old homestead of Meole, and the Rev. John Cotton, Vicar of Brace Meole, and some time Rector of Hanwood, as will be remembered from the foregoing pages, was one of his executors.

And it was in the very year we are now writing about—as the Old Oak thought—that another of the Worshipful Mysterie, or Company of the Drapers, to which in his time old Degory Watur, or Warter, belonged, was the means of founding that excellent institution called Millington's Hospital. His will was made in 1734, but being disputed in Chancery the hospital and school were not entered upon by the hospitallers and scholars till August 1, 1749. 'It stands on an eminence at the extremity of Frankwell, or rather Frankville, suburb, called *Chapel Yard*, probably the ancient title of a religious building denominated Cadogan's Chapel, adjoining which was a stone cross.' After giving a full account of this excellent charity, of the scholars, and of the poor beadsmen in their gowns, Archdeacon Owen tells us, what I must think a wise foresight in James Millington: 'The founder ordered a sermon to be preached in St. Chad's Church annually on August 12, being his birthday, for which the minister has one guinea; and concludes his directions by strictly enjoining that no Dissenter, of any sect or denomination whatever, shall have any benefit from his donation, or any other person, unless of the true orthodox principles of the Church of England.' Such a regulation is wisely made, and he that makes it may doubtless be in charity with all men. We are undoing much of this!

And as an old Shrewsbury exhibitioner, to whom the manes of Millington, Taylor, Careswell, and others are dear, I bethought me of those lines in Daniel's 'Civil War' which he wrote with reference to Henry VI.:—

And now the weakness of that feeble head
(That doth neglect all care, but his soul's care)
To easy means of practice ministered
Unto th' ambitious members, to prepare
Their own desires to what their humours led ;
That all good actions coldly followed are
And sev'ral tending hopes do wholly bend
To other now than to the public end.

Some exhibitions, scholarships, and fellowships may be tied too close, but to throw everything open to everybody, irrespective of a founder's will, can scarcely be called distributive justice. We should look to this in time, or we shall certainly have no new exhibitions founded for the dear old schools.

The next incident alluded to by my Talking Friend was the marriage of Frederick, Prince of Wales, on which there were rejoicings in the Old Town and in the valley of the Rea, where a sort of a 'wake' seems to have been held, and Ponsert Hill was resorted to as it used to be in old Saxon times.

This gives us a date 1736. But of any particulars of history and of the estrangement between the Prince and the King in the year following nothing was known here.

It was on November 20 this year that Queen Caroline died, as Lord Mahon says, 'to the deep and lasting grief, not only of the King, but of the nation.'

One of our old dramatists, Greene, in his 'Alphonso, King of Arragon,' has the line which follows :—

That year is rare which ne'er feels winter's storm,

and the winter of 1739–40 was well remembered by my Talking Friend, and that churlish time for many years after was known as the year of 'THE GREAT FROST,' which began on Christmas Eve and lasted till March. The whole valley of the Rea suffered sadly, and the very fountains of the stream were frozen up, so that all the water-fowl—wild ducks, moorhens, water-rails, &c.—quitted it altogether. The former resorted chiefly to Marton Pool, of the latter many perished, whilst those which did not, especially the moorhens, fed with the poultry in the vicinity of the stream, and the

water-rails and snipes picked what they could with the woodcocks in the syches, as many witnessed in the Minsterley Woods and in the Hill Beck and Dripping Sych at the Oaks, to say nothing of the little warm bubbling springs about Hanwood and Meole and Sibberscot. The Old Oak said that he hardly remembered such a time, and added that the rooks and the crows, as well as the thrushes and the blackbirds, which alighted on his branches were nothing but feathers and bones. As for the partridges, they died in scores, and the poor little quails (of which there were many in those days, and were pleasant to hear whistling and calling on an autumn night) seem to have been annihilated for years—even on the Newnham Ground, which they always frequented, as they did in the days of my boyhood, when I gathered the cotton-grass, which grew plentifully in the swampy ground beneath the knolls.

The Rev. Benjamin Wingfield, as has been stated before, was now the Rector of Hanwood, though I think he did not much reside ; and he it was who told the people at the old homestead at Meole that the Severn was quite frozen over, and that a sort of a fair was being held upon it, and that a printing press was set to work. The news soon spread amongst the people, and within a day or two they got a holiday and off they trudged—and sure enough there was a fair beneath the Welsh Bridge, and they saw a sheep roasted on the ice, and tumblers and jugglers showing off their feats, and the man at work at his printing press !

Since the frost in 1684, when so many had perished, and even oaks were split and riven, there appears to have been none more severe than this. Of the earlier one such is the entry in a London citizen's diary : 'The frost this year was terrible. It began in the beginning of December 1683. The people kept trades on the Thames, as in a fair, till February 4, 1684. About forty coaches daily plied on the Thames as on dry land. Bought this book at a shop upon the ice in the middle of the Thames.' Pretty much the same is said of the frost of the year we are now treating of. Swift says in writing to Mrs. Whitway : 'It is impossible to have health in such desperate weather ; but you are worse used than others.

Every creature of either sex is uneasy; for our kingdom is turned to be a Muscovy or worse.' And again: 'I have been many days heartily concerned for your ill-health; it is now twenty-five days since we have found nothing but frost and misery, and they may continue for as many more. This day is yet the coldest of them all'—i.e. January 18, 1740.

On speaking of trees being killed by frost my Talking Friend observed: 'There is a mighty difference between heart of oak in our native forests, such as the Stiperstones and others, and the poplar and the plane tree planted by the hand of man in the Shrubbery,' so proud was he of his position.

One evening towards the end of this year the millers on the Rea returned from Shrewsbury and told how a part of the covering of the market-house there had fallen down and killed two of a brother miller's horses that stood under it; for which they were very sorry, but glad to have escaped themselves, as their own horses were standing close by at that very time. Eleanor Guinum, and Elinor Pan, of Hanwood, were in the town that day, and had had some of the new drink called 'tay,' i.e. tea, at Betty Altræ's, who lived in the Sextry, leading out of Kiln Lane into the High Street—the present King's Head Street. They both of them told their neighbours they thought it but poor stuff.

It should be mentioned here that my Talking Friend constantly heard people speaking of 'THE GREAT COMMONER' of those days. It is hardly necessary to say that this was the great William Pitt, afterwards Earl of Chatham, who was worth more to the nation than the great diamond which his grandfather, who was Governor of Madras, brought home with him. The people, says Lord Mahon, considered him their best and truest friend, and when he was promoted to an earldom they still felt that his elevation over them was like that of Rochester Castle over his own town of Chatham—raised above them only for their own protection and defence.

In mentioning the names of celebrated men it may be always noted how local circumstances tend to keep up their memories. This was the case with Anson—the well-known George, Lord Anson—voyager and admiral—to whom the French commander said, as he delivered up his sword on the

capture of the 'Invincible' and the 'Glory,' '*Monsieur, vous avez vaincu "l'Invincible," et la "Gloire" vous suit.*'

This great and adventurous man (though something, it must be said, of a buccaneer, even in the capture of galleons) was well known by name in these parts, owing to the *tickney-ware* which passed up and down in panniers from Staffordshire in which county he was born—at Colwich, about three miles from Rugby. It was natural enough for the Staffordshire crockery-carriers to speak of the great hero, and as *natives* they did so in no measured terms. It was satisfactory to the Old Oak to hear them speak of the wooden walls of his old ship the 'Centurion,' which did him such good service. 'Had they not been of oak,' he said, 'they never could have weathered the storms they did!' It may be added that he lived to convey her Majesty to England in 1761 from Cuxhaven. He was buried at Colwich on June 14, 1762, and there is a monument to him in the church. In his latter days he is said to have taken to play, but was not a clever hand at such work; whereupon a wag remarked that, 'though he had been round the world, he seemed to know very little about it after all!'

One morning I was refreshing myself beneath the shade of my Talking Friend, and, as it chanced, Dick Hinley came by with a great heron dangling in his hand. He had been ordered to watch what was called 'The Big Pool,' which at that time was filled with the fry of young carp and tench, and had shot it as it lighted there. He told me how it flew up '*pendle*' (i.e. perpendicular, as a wounded pheasant towers), and how he brought it down with the old duck-gun—a marvellously long gun of those days used in duck-shooting and for killing larks. When he left me to show it to his master I was aware, by the rustling of his leaves, that the Old Oak had something to say; and so, being used to the token, I was all attention. Presently he began:—

'Dick Hinley, as we call him, is no great favourite with the people—his eye is too grey and his lips are too thin—but he is shrewd and clever, and no man can spy a hare on her form, or catch her, better than he; and I'll be bound on my oakship to say if there's a badger left in the country, or

if a squirrel's dray be wanted, he is the man of all others to find it. But, somehow or another, even I am not fond of him, and he is about all hours of the night.' And then he added, 'Somewhere about the time you were just speaking of there lived in this neighbourhood a very good man, and a great favourite, owing to his quiet, inoffensive habits, by name Oliver Vaughan, whose occupation was that of a thatcher; but when he had nothing else to do he was what would now be called an ornithologist, or bird-fancier, or something of that sort; no one in the country knew the habits of birds so well. He would sit and watch the beautiful arrow-like kingfisher by the hour, and he said it was astonishing the number of fishes he would take, and that his very nest was in part made of their bones. So, again, he would watch the heron, with his one leg up in the shallow shady side of a pool, so as not to disturb a minnow by a splash; and he constantly saw him draw out the eels from the mud in one of the Arlescott ponds. So clever was he that he could bring the land-rails near him with a common comb, and no Spaniard was possessed of a better quail-call than his, though it was of the simplest construction possible. There was no one but loved Oliver Vaughan!'

One day last year, when I was with my old Christ Church friend, G. W. Batchellor, now rector of that lovely spot, Trotton in Sussex, he told me that in the preceding summer some one had brought them a tame fishing cormorant, and he expressed himself very glad that there were no wild ones in that part of the country, for if they had not a ring about their necks to prevent them from swallowing their prey, they should never have a trout out of the stream. What a rest for a cormorant were a great stone beneath that most lovely of all lovely bridges! Pity it was that Otway ever left that charming village!

But I do not know if cormorants, though they are easily tamed, have been ever used to fish with in England much, but in China it is a common custom, and a thong is fastened round the throat to hinder them swallowing what they catch. Milton methinks, hath done the bird some injustice.

Since the days of the second George many birds have

become very scarce in the valley of the Rea. The heron even can hardly be called common, and as for the bittern—which could then be heard booming in every marsh between Meole and the Stiperstones by night—this fine bird has become so rare as scarcely ever to be seen or heard of—rare as the old chough in Cornwall, 'only to be found,' Mr. L'Estrange says, 'in the cover about Gew-graze.'

In those days my Talking Friend spoke of the prosperity of the valley—of many clearances of wood having been made and of draining the land so as to clear it of sedges and rushes. But it was many years before much advance was made in this way, and in my younger days all the fields that lay near the Rea were in winter the haunts of snipes and plovers—the peewit, or common plover, generally, but every now and then a flight of the golden, especially in the fields between Newnham and Yockleton, which they seem to affect most. The quiet haunt of the peewit, in latter days, was Polmer Pool—an outlying piece of water which has been alluded to before in our local narrative.

Late in the spring of 1743 the whole road from Bishop's Castle to Meole, Hanwood, and Shrewsbury rang again with an account of a cold-blooded murder which had been committed. The first news of it was brought by old William Hughes of Edgebold, who stopped on his way at the old homestead of Meole, as he was in the habit of doing whenever he passed that way. My Talking Friend's bones quite shuddered as he spoke of it, and he added that 'it was a rare thing to hear of bloodshed in these parts.' I find this mention made of the murder in Phillips' 'History of Shrewsbury,' under 1743.

'One Cadman'—a name with which we are familiar—'a shearman, returning from Bishop's Castle with the excise money from the collector there to the drapers in Shrewsbury, was robbed and murdered near Norbury by Woollaston and his son Edmund, both of Bishop's Castle. They were both taken. The father hanged himself in gaol, but the son was hanged in chains near Norbury.' The murder was committed on May 12, and the Old Oak was right.

Of the French invasion the next year in the interests of

the Young Pretender nothing was known in the valley, though the heavy storm on February 25 was felt throughout the length and breadth of it. Horace Walpole writes to Sir Horace Mann that this storm certainly saved us from invasion. 'There is just come advice,' are his words, 'that the great storm on the 25th of last month—the very day the embarcation was to have sailed from Dunkirk—destroyed twelve of their transports and obliged the whole number of troops, which were 15,000, to debark. You may look upon the invasion as at an end, at least for the present; though, as everything is to come to a crisis, one shall not be surprised to hear of the attempt renewed.' This was written March 5, 1744.

One night about this time all the willows in the valley were swept off; but they are rapid in their growth, and the stream of the Rea is lined by them.

It was a July day, and as I sat under the Old Oak I heard two or three notes, a low plaintive sort of squeak, uttered by a bird on the wing, the sight of which I did not catch, but it was evidently disturbed. My Talking Friend at once said it was the dor-hawk, fern-owl, or night-jar, and that when flushed in the daytime they frequently sought refuge in the boughs, where they sat lengthwise, and not, as other birds do, across. He added that it was also called the churn-owl, or wheel-bird; and those who have heard a score of them by night on the sides of the vast Penmaenmawr, as I did forty years ago, might have thought there was a score of spinning-wheels all at work.

Late in the year—it was in the month of October—John and Elizabeth Adon of Hanwood brought word to the village that when they left Shrewsbury to return a great fire was burning at the Gullet in Shrewsbury. It was on a Friday, and I see by Phillips that 'great damage was done in the warehouses of Mr. Benion, grocer, and Mr. Morgan, ironmonger.' The same authority states that the Conduit Reservoir on Clarimond Hill was built this year. Much as they loved good Shropshire beer, it was the custom of all the country people to drink at the conduits, and the news of the town was picked up there. Even when I was a boy I recollect to have seen

the women there in troops. The conduits were, in fact, what '*the places of drawing water*' were to the Israelitish women.

Though it was a matter not likely to be whispered by the reeds on the banks of the Rea, nor a point to ruffle the leaves of the yellow water-lilies in the Lower Harrisals, it may be mentioned here that a great man died this year, and one whose name will remain amongst us, whatever different views may be taken of his poetry. Mr. Pope, says Spence in his 'Anecdotes,' 'died May 30, in the evening; but they did not know the exact time; for his departure was so easy that it was imperceptible even to the standers by. May our end be like his.'

Early in the next year—in March 1745—died Lord Orford, that great spirit of his day, better known by the name of Sir Robert Walpole. In the old county of Shropshire his was a name which carried weight, for if they did not like his Hanoverian politics there was a bluffness about his character which jumped with the feelings and tastes of many of the old squires of his day. Many a bottle of wine had they cracked with him, and some had hunted and shot with him at Houghton in Norfolk, and knew how hospitable he could be; nor were they a sort of people there to object to wild revelry, and what the ever-memorable John Hales of Eton called 'intempestive commissation and compotation.' He certainly was a coarse file with which soft bodies are rubbed to powder, and might have suggested to Aaron Hill, his contemporary, these lines :—

Tender-handed touch a nettle,
  And it stings you for your pains ;
Grasp it like a man of mettle,
  And it soft as silk remains.
So it is with common natures :
  Treat them gently, they rebel ;
But be rough as nutmeg-graters,
  And the rogues obey you well.

It is thus that Horace Walpole expresses himself in writing to Sir Horace Mann : 'However irreparable his personal loss may be to his friends, he certainly died critically well for himself. He had lived to stand the rudest trials with honour, and to see his character universally cleared, his enemies brought to

infamy for their ignorance or villany, and the world allowing him to be the only man in England fit to be what he had been ; and he died at a time when his age and infirmities prevented his again undertaking the support of a Government, which engrossed his whole care, and which he foresaw was falling into the last confusion. In this I hope his judgment failed. His fortune attended him to the last, for he died of the most painful of all distempers with little or no pain.'

I have always thought myself that in the management of the House he has only had one equal—the late Lord Palmerston ; and I find my view supported in Lord Chesterfield's character of him, who doubted, however, if an impartial character of him will ever be transmitted to posterity. His words are : ' He was both the best Parliament-man and the ablest manager of Parliament that I believe ever lived. An artful rather than an eloquent speaker, he saw, as by intuition, the disposition of the House, and pressed or receded accordingly.'

The great event of the year, as is well known, was the landing of Charles Edward, or the Young Pretender ; of whom, and of his adventures and hairbreadth escapes, and of his gallantry, it would be out of place to dwell at length in these pages ; but as a great alarm was spread in the Old Town later in the year, and as the news travelled quick up the valley of the Rea, some few particulars may be noticed in passing ; for they were stirring times.

What caused the alarm in Shrewsbury was the arrival of the Pretender, with the Dukes of Athol and Perth, at Ashbourn, about sixty miles distant, and thirteen-and-a-half N.W. by W. of Derby, on December 4. Within a few days the report was current that the Highlanders were approaching, and all was excitement and something like dismay amongst all parties—the Jacobites as well as the adherents of the house of Hanover dreading equally the pillage of Scotch marauders, who were said to spare no one, and even to eat children. Nor did the presence of the newly-raised fusiliers, under Lord Herbert, lord lieutenant of the county, inspire any confidence, for although they marched out to meet the rebels they soon fell back. It appears, however, that the report was a false

one, for, as our historians tell, 'the Scots were so far from any thoughts of advancing to Shrewsbury that they were on that very night (December 8) marching northwards from Leek to Macclesfield. Having received no encouragement from their friends in England, they commenced their retreat homewards on the second day after their arrival at Derby; and the inhabitants of Shrewsbury quickly returned to their former tranquillity.'

As was reported, the Scots took possession of Sir Brooke Boothby's house—the old manor-house—at Ashbourn, expelling him and his family. On his return he found the names of the officers chalked upon the doors of the rooms which they had occupied. The room in which Charles Edward slept is still shown, and some of the chalk-marks are still to be seen under the white paint by which they were overlaid.

It is with reference to his march that Horace Walpole writes to Sir Horace Mann, saying, 'The Duke of Cumberland, from some strange want of intelligence, lay last week for four-and-twenty hours under arms at Stone, in Staffordshire, expecting the rebels every moment, while they were marching in all haste to Derby. The news of this threw the town into great consternation; but his Royal Highness repaired his mistake, and got to Northampton, between the Highlanders and London.' It is recorded in a note of Walpole's, and is repeated by Lord Mahon, that the day of the rebels' approach to Derby—it was on December 6—was long remembered under the name of BLACK FRIDAY. So great was the consternation that George II. was said to have had his treasures packed up, ready to send to Hanover.

But a little more must be said, beginning with the beginning, and before the alarm in the Old Town which frightened the people out of their propriety.

It was on July 25, old style, that Charles Edward reached Scotland in the *La Doutelle*, a French brig, and landed at Lochnanuagh, and thence was conducted to Boradale, a farmhouse of Clanranald's, close by; whilst the King was in Hanover and the Duke of Cumberland in Flanders. For all this the reader is referred to Mr. John Homes' narrative, which, with all its shortcomings, Sir Walter Scott evidently prized, fascinated

no doubt by the account of the gallant and good Lochiel—the gentle Lochiel, as Highlanders still call him—and known to us all from Campbell's beautiful poem, 'Lochiel's Warning'; brave as Hector of old, and not to be daunted by the Wizard's second sight!

> Lochiel! Lochiel! beware of the day!
> For, dark and despairing, my sight I may seal,
> But man cannot cover what God will reveal;
> 'T is the sunset of life gives me mystical lore
> And coming events cast their shadows before!

Horace Walpole in writing to Mann, under September 13, says: 'If the boy has apparently no enemies in Scotland, at least he has openly very few friends. For cannon they have nothing but one-pounders; their greatest resource is money; they have fine louis-d'ors'; in which, by the bye, he is mistaken, for money was scarce; and then presently he adds: 'Lord Bath has made a piece of a ballad, "The Duke of Newcastle's Speech to the Regency"; I have heard but these two lines of it:—

> Pray consider, my Lords, how disastrous a thing
> To have two Princes of Wales, and never a King!'

At this time, certainly, the King's advisers were ill-informed, and not alive to the danger of the rebellion, for on August 19 the Prince raised the standard in the valley of Glenfinnan. Few readers of 'Waverley' but will remember the lines of Flora MacIvor, which Shrewsbury boys used to recite:—

> But the dark hours of night and of slumber are past,
> The morn on our mountains is dawning at last;
> Glenaladale's peaks are illumed with the rays,
> And the streams of Glenfinnon leap bright in the blaze.
>
> O high-minded Moray!—the exil'd, the dear!—
> In the flash of the dawning the STANDARD uprear!
> Wide, wide, on the winds of the north let it fly,
> Like the sun's latest flash when the tempest is high!

Passing over what the Prince effected further north, and his arrival in Edinburgh, it will be enough in these pages to say next that the royal forces were defeated at Prestonpans, about eight miles off, on September 21, and that Sir John

Cope fled incontinently to Berwick-on-Tweed, the bearer of his own ill news. This flight is the subject of a favourite Scottish ballad, 'Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye waukin' yet?' Walpole's account of Sir John Cope is incorrect in more ways than one, and he speaks of him very slightingly. Sir Walter Scott, on the contrary, had a feeling for his misfortunes, and says, adopting the epithet 'poor' from Horace Walpole, 'Poor Johnnie, the object of so much satire and ridicule, was, in fact, by no means either a coward or a bad soldier, or even a contemptible general upon ordinary occasions. He was a pudding-headed, thick-brained sort of a person, who could act well enough in circumstances with which he was conversant, especially as he was perfectly acquainted with the routine of his profession, and had been often engaged in action' (Walpole says he never saw a battle but at Dettingen, where he got his red ribbon), 'without ever, till the fatal field of Preston, having shown sense enough to run away. On the present occasion he was, as sportsmen say, at fault.'

Meanwhile a serious evil was approaching—and indeed at hand—the increase of the cattle murrain, which had showed itself early in the century. It is of this that Horace Walpole writes, premising, as regarded the rebellion: 'My fears have been great, from the greatness of our stake; but I now write in the greatest confidence of our getting over this ugly business.' To which he adds, 'We have another very disagreeable affair that may have fatal consequences: there rages a murrain among the cows; we dare not eat milk, butter, beef, nor anything from this species. Unless there is snow or frost soon it is likely to spread dreadfully, though hitherto it has not reached many miles from London. At first it was imagined that the Papists had poisoned the pools; but the physicians have pronounced it infectious, and brought from abroad.' Such is Walpole's account of it to Sir H. Mann, under November 29; and not far removed from this date, we find these lines in Soame Jenyns' 'Squire and the Parson':—

> My barns are half unthatch'd, until'd my house,
> Lost by this fatal sickness all my cows.

Horace Walpole was right in his statement that it came from

abroad, for early in the century it had raged most destructively in the States of Holland, in Lombardy, and at Hamburg. In Holland the loss was immense.

As we are now again suffering from this ruinous visitation, which commenced last year—i.e. in 1865—I venture to jot down a few remarks.

The murrain of the last century began with the *milch cows* at Islington, and I think somewhere about 1720. It appears that comparatively few *oxen* were attacked, but that it was as fatal as the now called Rinderpest, which has attacked both cows and oxen. It is stated that if a healthy animal grazed where an infected one had been it was presently seized with the distemper. The head hung down, the nose ran, as in glanders amongst horses, the breath was nauseous and fetid, and it died in three or four days.

After eight days' rest in Glasgow, Charles Edward marched for Stirling, and, as at this time he had the greatest force he had ever mustered—somewhere about 9,000 men—he determined to besiege the Castle. But it was too strong for his arms, and General Blakeney was too experienced a governor. On the advance of General Hawley, nominated by the Duke of Cumberland to succeed Marshal Wade, he had a very different person to contend with, and, owing to Hawley's mismanagement, the Scots gained that victory at Falkirk, on January 17, which so much inspirited them.

Under January 28 Horace Walpole writes another letter to Mann, in which he refers to another battle lost in Scotland, adding, 'Our arms cannot succeed there. Hawley, of whom I said so much to you in my last, has been as unsuccessful as Cope, and by almost every circumstance the same, except that Hawley had less want of skill and much more presumption. The very same dragoons ran away at Falkirk that ran away at Prestonpans.' It was a prisoner taken in this fight—an Irishman, Lord Mahon suggests—who was heard to mutter to one of his comrades, 'By my soul, if Charlie goes on in this way Prince Frederick will never be King George!'

It was fortunate that the Duke of Cumberland was in England, and ready to march northwards, for Walpole remarks, and he was the man of all others to pick up the gossip

of the day: 'With many other glories, the English courage seems gone too! The great dependence is on the Duke; the soldiers adore him, and with reason: he has a lion's courage, vast vigilance and activity, and, I am told, great military genius. For my own particular, I am uneasy that he is gone.' This is from the same letter as the last, to which he adds in his next, February 7: 'The Duke's name disperses armies as the Pretender's raises them.'

The Duke advanced rapidly to Edinburgh, where he remained but thirty hours, but on approaching Falkirk he found that the rebels had retreated. Of this retreat and of the advance into the Highlands it is not necessary to tell in these pages; the historians of the time tell of all this, and THE TALES OF A GRANDFATHER, from the kindly hand of Scott, are the delight of children. It will be enough here to refer to some few details, and to the defeat of Culloden, after which the Prince in his wanderings had but to say doggedly—

> Let myself and fortune
> Tug for the time to come.

When it was decided not to fight another battle the army, inefficiently engineered, retreated from before Stirling, having spiked their guns and blown up their powder magazines. It advanced by way of Crieff, in Perthshire, and there separated into two bodies. The aim of the host was Inverness, and they were pursued by the Duke of Cumberland, whose headquarters were at Perth, but contrived to escape. Some nine days after this the Prince on approaching Inverness found it fortified with a ditch and a palisade, and held by Lord Loudon's army. The result was that he halted at Moray Castle, ten miles off, the chief seat of MacIntosh, who was serving with Lord Loudon. Not so the Lady MacIntosh, for she raised the clan in the Prince's favour, and, to use the words of Lord Mahon, 'rode in their front as commander, with a man's bonnet on her head and pistols at her saddle-bow.' The neighbourhood of Moray Castle, however, and the security in which Charles was living, incited Lord Loudon to a sudden night march in hopes to seize his person. But this well-concerted scheme was baffled

by no more than six or seven of the MacIntoshes, who, meeting the King's troops, disported themselves in different parts of the wood and fired upon the advancing columns, at the same time imitating the war-cries of Lochiel, Keppoch, and other well-known clans, and thus producing an impression that the whole Highland army was at hand. The King's troops, astonished and doubtful from the darkness, hastily turned back to Inverness, where they arrived in so much confusion that their retreat was afterwards known by the name of the 'Rout of Moray.' A perfect illustration this of the well-known words of Virgil:—

Dolus, an virtus, quis in hoste requirat?

For the incidents between this time and the Pretender's great defeat the reader must look to the historians of the day. This took place at Drummossie, or Culloden Moor, a heath in the east corner of Inverness, and about five miles from the town of the same name. The fight was fought on April 16. Walpole writes to Mann, April 25: 'On the 16th the Duke, by forced marches, came up with the rebels a little on this side Inverness. By the way, the battle is not christened yet; I only know that neither Prestonpans nor Falkirk are to be godfathers.' Suffice it to say here that the battle was a decisive one, and the rebellion was as good as at an end.

For the escape of the Pretender and for his wanderings I must again refer the reader to the historians of the time; but it must never be forgotten that for the long five months from April to September, on the 20th of which month he embarked for France, landing there on the 29th, during which he wandered as a fugitive among the Highlanders, with, as was before remarked, 30,000*l.* on his head, no soul ever thought of betraying him. It is to these his wanderings, that the Wizard in 'Lochiel' alludes:—

> Lo! anointed by Heaven with the vials of wrath,
> Behold where he flies on his desolate path!
> How in darkness and billows he sweeps from my sight;
> Rise, rise, ye wild tempests, and cover his flight!

The episode of Flora Macdonald is known to all, and a

very beautiful one it is in all its features; and Bozzy's account of Dr. Johnson's sleeping in the very same, and on the same bed, in which Charles Edward slept, and with no 'ambitious thoughts,' is quite in his own style. Johnson's own remark in his 'Journey to the Western Islands' is simple and brief: 'We came to Kingsborough, a place distinguished by that name, because the King lodged here when he landed at Port Re. We were entertained with the usual hospitality by Mr. Macdonald and his lady, Flora Macdonald, a name that will be mentioned in history, and, if courage and fidelity be virtues, mentioned with honour. She is a woman of middle stature, soft features, and elegant presence.' After her return from London, where no charge against her could be substantiated, she and her husband emigrated to America, but returned again to the rock-bound Skye. She died March 4, 1790.

Those who may wish to read the character of Charles Edward will find two masterly sketches of it by Sir Walter Scott and Lord Mahon. Smollett's 'Tears of Scotland' were written in this year—the memorable '46!

> Mourn, hapless Caledonia! mourn,
> Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn!

A good deal was said in the old county, in Shrewsbury, and in the valley of the Rea, about the cruelties of the Duke of Cumberland, who earned for himself the title of the 'Butcher,' and, it is thought, not without cause. In his 'Reminiscences' Walpole is certainly more favourable to him than afterwards, but in writing to Sir Horace Mann, under August 1, 1746, he says, having given an account of the trial of the rebel lords, and particularly of old Balmerino, 'the King is much inclined to some mercy; but the Duke, who has not so much of Cæsar after a victory as in gaining it, is for the utmost severity. It was lately proposed in the city to present him with the freedom of some company; one of the aldermen said aloud, "Then let it be of the Butchers'!"'

Lord Chesterfield, instead of executions and the dungeon, 'was for schools and colleges to civilise the Highlands';

and Lord Chatham showed no small tact in enlisting the Highlanders into regiments for the service of the Crown.' Certainly in the long run cruelty can never answer. 'Soft words break no bones,' said the proverb of the ancients, and it has the test of experience to back it. As for all barbarous executions consummated in cold blood, they tend but to execrations,

> And shrieks, like mandrakes torn out of the earth,
> That living mortals, hearing them, run mad.

In the year 1747 the Infirmary was opened in Shrewsbury, and it was a matter much dwelt upon in the valley of the Rea, where it had staunch supporters. The present building was erected in 1830, but the original one, opened in the spring of this year, was in the first instance, says Archdeacon Owen, 'intended for a mansion-house by Corbet Kynaston, Esq., who erected it on the town-wall, of which he had obtained a grant from the Corporation.' The site of it is very striking, and our historians tell, with becoming pride, that 'Shrewsbury had the distinguished honour of very nearly leading the way in this career of benevolence, being, at least in the conception, second only to Winchester; for in a printed address, dated July 24, 1737, and entitled "A proposal for erecting an infirmary for the poor, sick, and lame in this county and neighbourhood," that "recently" established in the city just mentioned is the only one referred to.'

No charities have ever been more blessed than the infirmaries in our land, and the words of Bishop Horsley (in his sermon preached for the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, 1796) are true to the purpose as any can be: 'Now that the miraculous powers are withdrawn, we act in conformity to the spirit of our holy religion and to our Lord's own example when we endeavour what we can to extend relief by such natural means as are within our power to the like instances of distress.' Who can conceive the good of such institutions?

> When throbbing pulses silently
> Move heart to heart by sympathy.

One little incident attaches to the valley this year which my Talking Friend reported to me. Old James Cross of

Hanwood had made one of his periodical journeys to Westminster, where he had friends, and on his return he mentioned at the old homestead at Meole how he had seen two Oxford scholars conducted by two catchpoles (such was the word he used) through the courts of Westminster, with a label on their foreheads, and how they were compelled to ask pardon of the several courts for having, in their cups, drunk the Pretender's health, using seditious words against the King.

All of this was very true, and a most unwise proceeding on the part of the Government. What else was it but breaking the butterfly on a wheel? The poor youths were fined five nobles each, condemned to be imprisoned for two years, and to give security for seven years' good behaviour after. No doubt this dropped through, as did the intended prosecution of Dr. Parnel, the Vice-Chancellor; but there was a smack of the old Star Chamber about it all, and it gave great dissatisfaction to many besides the common people.

It is remarkable how many great commotions, in many lands, have arisen from causes no greater than this. Rome and Greece can tell how ill-advised and unwise a thing it is to interfere with the just liberties of the subject, and to inflict harsh and heavy punishment where censure was enough.

> Anger doth still his own mishap increase;
> If any comfort live, it is in peace.

The disbanding of the soldiers and sailors after the war which ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle left many idle hands to overrun the country, and at this time it was that a scheme of colonisation was pitched upon, and Nova Scotia selected as the spot. The execution of the scheme was in the hands of the Board of Trade and Plantations, over which the Earl of Halifax presided, giving his name to the present great town of Halifax there, with the finest dockyard in the British colonies—not less than fourteen acres in extent. It is to be feared that in this settlement most that Lord Bacon advised so long before was disregarded, but it nevertheless became a very great place, albeit commenced with 'the scum of people.'

It was by some 'wicked condemned men' that Horace Walpole was robbed in the November of 1749, and he writes to Horace Mann early in the year following: 'You will hear little news from England but of robberies; the numbers of disbanded soldiers and sailors have all taken to the road, or rather to the street; people are almost afraid of stirring after it is dark.'

It is the founding of this plantation, or colony as we now speak, which brings us into connection with the valley of the Rea; for old Emmanuel Tregortha (the name remained till very lately in Shrewsbury), a Welshman and an adventurous old soldier, was amongst those who emigrated with his family. Originally of Wrexham, he lived for some years at Sibberscott, some two miles from Hanwood, nearly opposite to Hinton, on the Pontesbury road; but being unsettled in his habits, irregular even, a quiet lover of *cwrwdhu*, and of an old cracked Welsh harp, which he always retained—in fact, being found too often at the Lea Cross, where he sang Welsh songs to his own music, his labour on the farm was unsatisfactory to his employer. The result was that he enlisted—was not seen for years—and then came back again to his old haunts, with his old harp, a wife, and three children. Having been a sort of a favourite always, old associations helped him to friends – a small kit was made up for him and his family, and to Nova Scotia he departed, harp and all—availing himself of the free passage there, and looking to the fifty acres of land he was to have as a settler and ten for each of his children. My Talking Friend did not call to mind that anything more was ever heard of him. He might have said when he left, as old Parolles said, 'I am now, sir, muddied in Fortune's moat, and smell somewhat strong of her strong displeasure'; but the Old Oak had a great liking for him, and always hoped that he prospered.

In the spring of 1750 old James Cross was again in London, and when he came back he gave a wonderful account of the panic that seized on the Londoners owing to two shocks of an earthquake, the one in February and the other in March. To the latter Horace Walpole alluded in a letter

to Mann, dated March 11, beginning his letter with these lines from Dryden's 'All for Love':—

> Portents and prodigies are grown so frequent
> That they have lost their name.

It does not appear that it reached more than ten miles beyond London, where the old watchmen cried, 'Past four o'clock and a dreadful earthquake.' All the people of Hanwood declared to old James Cross that nothing of the sort had been felt in the valley of the Rea, not even at Snailbeach; and my venerable Friend declared to me by his 'Heartship of Oak' that he never felt it.

In the October of this year it was whispered among the old Jacobites of the county—who received their information from Lichfield—that the Pretender was in London, or had been there; and this information was correct enough, for he was a fortnight there in September, and then returned to France, finding that any further attempt to retrieve the throne was useless.

Meanwhile the trade of the country increased and the nation was prosperous, and it is remarkable, as concerned the Bill concerning the removal of the duties on American pig and bar iron, that the smiths and ironmongers of Brummagem were entirely in its favour. John Altree of Hanwood, who had business there frequently, reported their views, which were certainly early ones of free trade.

The first matter of importance which reached the valley in the year 1751, as far as my Talking Friend recollected, was the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, which took place on March 20, between nine and ten at night; 'more beloved for his affability and good-nature,' writes Lord Chesterfield to his son, 'than esteemed for his steadiness and conduct.' He presently speaks of his eldest son—afterwards George III.—'as a most hopeful boy, gentle and good-natured, with good sound sense.' His conduct on the death of his father showed that he was not likely to turn out a thorn or a wild grape. Walpole even was heard to say, 'Prince George, who has a most amiable countenance, behaved excessively well on his father's death. When they told him

of it he turned pale and laid his hand on his breast. Ayscough said, "I am afraid, sir, you are not well!" He replied, "I feel something here, just as I did when I saw the two workmen fall from the scaffold at Kew."' Such was the heart that was in the boy!

In an earlier portion of the letter here referred to, Walpole had said, 'The grief for the dead brother is affectedly great; the aversion to the living one as affectedly displayed. They cried about an elegy and added: 'Oh! that it were but his brother!' On 'Change they said, 'Oh! that it were but the Butcher!' Such is the way in which our people will express themselves; but, happily, their bark is worse than their bite, and such words are sort of safety-valve. The elegy alluded to is as follows—the stinging effusion, probably, of a disappointed and malcontent Jacobite. Certainly no member of the family was spared by those who were bitterly set against the Hanoverian Succession:—

Here lies Fred,
Who was alive and is dead.
Had it been his father
I had much rather;
Had it been his brother
Still better than another;
Had it been his sister
No one would have missed her;
Had it been the whole generation
Still better for the nation.
But since 'tis only Fred,
Who was alive and is dead,
There's no more to be said.

The eulogy in Smollett and Walpole's extract from the sermon at Mayfair Chapel are both equally out of place. One must sometimes fall back upon the truth, 'Use every man after his desert, and who shall escape whipping?'

It was towards the end of this year that a report was circulated in the valley—so my Talking Friend told me—that 'the Government was about to rob the people of eleven or twelve days'; and a curious report it was, and very generally used as a complaint, and even as a watchword of party. The reader will perceive at once that it referred to the alteration

of the style, or the reformation of the calendar, proposed by Lord Chesterfield, the most useful measure of the session.

The following summary is from Lord Mahon's 'History.' The error of the old style, now grown to eleven days, had long since been corrected by most civilised nations and acknowledged by all. Only England, with Russia and Sweden, clung to the exploded system, for no reason, apparently, than because it was a pope who established the new. 'It was not, in my opinion,' writes Chesterfield, 'very honourable to England to remain in a gross and avowed error, especially in such company.' Accordingly, having first paved the way by some articles in periodical works, he proceeded, in concert with the Earl of Macclesfield, Dr. Bradley, and other eminent men of science, to frame the heads of a Bill. He provided that the legal year should commence in future on January 1, and not, as heretofore, on March 25, and that to correct the old calendar eleven nominal days should be suppressed in September 1752, so that the day following the 2nd of that month should be styled the 14th. The difficulties that might result from the change, as affecting rents, leases, and bills of exchange, were likewise carefully considered and effectually prevented. With these provisions and safeguards the Bill was moved by Lord Chesterfield in a very able, and seconded by Lord Macclesfield in a very learned speech, and it was successfully carried through both Houses.

The first letter of Horace Walpole dated N.S. is to Mann, and from Strawberry Hill, October 28, 1752, and the appeal for loss of days, reported throughout the valley of the Rea, is thus corroborated: 'When, in 1754, Lord Macclesfield's eldest son stood a great contested election in Oxfordshire, one of the most vehement cries raised against him was, "Give us back the eleven days we have been robbed of!" And even several years later, when Dr. Bradley, worn down by his labours in the cause of science, was sinking under mortal disease, many of the common people ascribed his sufferings to a judgment from Heaven for having taken part in that impious undertaking.' 'And *thus* the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.'

It is painful to remark that the state of the country at

this time was not on the advance; indeed, it seems to have been worse than for some time before. After having mentioned the dreadful crime of a Miss Jefferies, who had murdered her uncle, and that of a Miss Hardy, who had murdered her father, Horace Walpole writes to Mann at Florence: 'It is shocking to think what a shambles this country is grown. Seventeen were executed this morning, after having murdered the turnkey on Friday night and almost forced open Newgate. One is forced to travel, even at noon, as if one was going to battle.'

It was in this year that one of the last (Dr. Archibald Cameron's, Lochiel's brother, being the last) executions for siding with the Stuarts took place, and unhappily at Shrewsbury. The sufferer was Mr. Thomas Anderson, of Richmond in Yorkshire, and a deserter from Sir John Ligonier's regiment of dragoons. He was, like many others, firmly attached to the Pretender, and was charged with enlisting troops for him. His trial was at Worcester on November 16, and lasted three days. Why he was brought to Shrewsbury for execution is not known. Every attempt was made to save him but ineffectually, as the petitioners were mostly of the Stuart party. An account of the whole transaction may be seen in our historians. He was buried in St. Mary's Churchyard the same day, and is said to have written the epitaph which follows, requesting it might be inscribed on his tombstone:—

Stop, traveller,
I've pass'd, repass'd the seas, and distant lands;
Can find no rest but in my Saviour's hands.

My Talking Friend perfectly well recollected the execution of Anderson, for, as is usual with country people, many went that day to Kingsland; but they returned with sad hearts, and hoped they might never see such a sight again. And yet, year after year, thousands of country people from all parts of the county have gone to witness the public executions in front of the gaol. I am afraid there is something of the barbarian left in us all. Who remembers not the propensities of the witty George Selwyn of those days, who contrived to be present at every execution, and had a bit of

the rope each culprit hung by? I suppose it must be said, and admitted too, that

> Every man hath business and desire,
> Such as it is.

The only other incident connected with the old town this year was reported on his return home by John Altree, who had been with his relatives to church at St. Giles', and reported it at Hanwood on his return. I transcribe the account from the pages of Phillips :—'1752.—On Christmas Day two houses on the Stone Bridge which were supported by beams crossing the navigation arch, through a decay of the case of the beams, fell into the river underneath with everything belonging unto them. The people occupying the houses, being at church, happily escaped.' This corroborated entirely the statement made by John Altree, and the day.

In the first letter written by Horace Walpole in the year 1753 to Mann at Florence he says in his peculiar way :—'In the memory of England there never was so inanimate an age; it is more fashionable to go to church than to either House of Parliament.' In this he alludes of course to the stirring of the dried bones by the result of Wesley and Whitefield's preaching; and a great thing, notwithstanding the excesses of enthusiasm, was it for the country, for it must be confessed that a numb and cold policy had settled upon priests and people. Lord Mahon has very properly devoted a chapter to the subject, to which I shall again allude.

The people at Hanwood, my Talking Friend told me, were taken much by surprise on Sunday morning in the year 1753 by hearing the banns of marriage asked after the second lesson, whereas heretofore they had been asked immediately before the sentences for the offertory. This was under the new Marriage Act (26 George II. c. 33), or, as it was called, Lord Hardwicke's Bill. Many inquiries were made about the alteration, and the rector for the time being, had to explain it to the congregation. Margaret Banes was but a girl in those days, and the wags by the brookside said significantly they supposed it had something to do with her. However, the people were quite contented with the rector's explanation,

especially when informed that the great desire of the Government was to avoid clandestine marriages. Shakspeare says somewhere—I think in his 'Othello'- -

> To be once in doubt
> Is once to be resolved;

which I suppose to mean, A man of an inquiring mind will probe the difficulty, like the worthy parishioners on the Rea-side, whereas the unthinking idler leaves all doubts unresolved and all knots untied.

No scholar but will be pleased to remember that the British Museum was founded this year. Here were combined the Cottonian Collections, Sir Hans Sloane's, and the Harleian, and Montagu House was purchased as a repository. Some gentlemen in this old county were great favourers and patrons of the undertaking.

The beginning of the year 1754 was cold and chilly, and my Talking Friend reported that the spring was wild and stormy. Pontesford Hill even and the Stiperstones, to say nothing of the Breidden, the Moel y Golfa, and the Welsh Mountains, were covered with snow till near the end of March. As usual Marton Pond was thronged with wild geese, and Polmer Pond, between Newnham and the Lea, was crowded with plovers of all sorts, and the Rea was the refuge for the wild duck, rarely ever known to fatten so well as then, and rarely found so large. Horace Walpole writes to Richard Bentley, Esq., the son of the great critic, on March 18:—'Almost as extraordinary news as our political is that it has snowed ten days, and most part of each day. It is "living in Muscovy amid ice and isolation; I hope lodgings will begin to let a little dear in Siberia!"'

The political news referred to was, no doubt, the death of Pelham, on which George II. said, in his hurried, excited way, 'Now I shall have no more peace.' And so it turned out. He sickened on the 3rd, and died on March 6. Horace Walpole, writing to Mann under March 7, says that he would little have expected the great event that happened yesterday: 'Mr. Pelham is dead,' presently adding, with reference to the political movements resulting in it, 'Though Mr. Pelham died but

yesterday, you can't imagine how much *a million* of people can talk in one day on such a subject.' What would he have said of the *three millions* in London now ?

Old Charles Cross was again in London this year on a visit to his relations, and brought back with him, for the edification of the villagers in Hanwood, such news as he could pick up, which did not appear to be much. He mentioned however, under the shade of my Talking Friend—so showing himself to be a man of some observation—how grand he thought the roof of Westminster Hall ; and alluding to the soldier-boy of Hanwood, who had joined in the Marlborough wars, he told how he saw the banners taken at Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet, on both sides of the hall, above the shops and the Court of Common Pleas. It may be added that he bought several classics and other books at the book-sellers' shops there, which were on the left side as you entered. These things are passed away now, but they serve as reminiscences, and Mr. Foss will inform anyone how truthful was the record of Charles Cross, and how trusty the good Old Oak's memory, as a faithful chronicler.

It should be added that the cultivation of the valley was still progressing, and although much was left undone there was great improvement. The price of labour was raised, and cottages were made more comfortable.

The year 1755 does not appear to have been a genial one, and my Talking Friend said that his early and midsummer shoots suffered—the first from drought, the latter from wet and wind. And, as a proof that his recollection was good as usual, Horace Walpole begins a letter to his friend George Montagu thus :—' Arlington Street, May 4th, as they call it, but the weather and the almanack of my feelings affirm that it is December ; ' which is substantiated by Lord Chesterfield, who, writing on May 2, says :—' To-morrow I go to Blackheath for the whole summer if we have one.' Under June 11 Walpole writes to Bentley :—' I was prevented from finishing my letter yesterday by—what do you think ? By no less magnificent a circumstance than a deluge. We have had an extraordinary drought ; no grass, no leaves, no flowers ; not a white rose for the festival of yesterday ! (that is, the Old

Pretender's birthday). About four arrived such a flood that we could not see out of the windows. The whole town was a lake, &c. It never came into my head before that a rainbow office for insuring against water might be very necessary.' To this he adds, under August 4: 'We have been exceedingly troubled for some time with St. Swithin's diabetes, and have not a dry thread in any walk about us.'

Meanwhile the political atmosphere was anything but settled. Nevertheless the King paid his visit to Hanover at the close of the session in April, his ministers having remonstrated in vain; nor did he return till the middle of September. Walpole writes to the Hon. H. Conway thus, under September 23, alluding to some old letter from Hollinshed, which he quotes in his own way:—'His Majesty of Cockney is returned exceedingly well, but grown a little out of humour at finding that we are not so much pleased with all the Prussians and Hessians that he has hired to recover the Ohio. We are an ungrateful people!'

Parliament met again on November 13. It was on the speech and the addresses that in the Commons the debate, which commenced at two in the afternoon, continued till five next morning—the longest then upon record, except that upon the Westminster Election in 1741. It was on this occasion, adds Lord Mahon, that William Gerard Hamilton delivered his famous harangue—he was ever afterwards called 'Single Speech Hamilton,' and thought by some, though without reason, to have been the author of Junius's Letters. His parliamentary logic 'proved how he had studied the tone of the House of Commons.'

It was on the same occasion that Pitt outdid himself, and as Horace Walpole was present, and no mean judge of eloquence, the reader may like to have his opinion in full: 'Then there was a young Mr. Hamilton,' he writes to the Hon. H. S. Conway, 'who spoke for the first time, and was at once perfection. His speech was set and full of antithesis, but these antitheses were all of argument; indeed, his speech was the most argumentative of the whole day; and he broke through the regularity of his own composition, aroused other people, and fell into his own track again with the greatest

ease. His figure is advantageous, his voice strong and clear, his manner spirited, and the whole with the ease of an established speaker. You will ask, What could go beyond this? Nothing but what was beyond what ever was, and that was Pitt. He spoke at past one for an hour and thirty-five minutes. There was more humour, wit, vivacity, fired language, more boldness—in short, more astonishing perfections than even you, who are used to him, can conceive.' To which he adds, on the day following, in a letter to Bentley, 'Pitt surpassed himself, and then I need not tell you that he surpassed Cicero and Demosthenes. What a figure would they, with their formal, laborious, cabinet orations, make *vis-à-vis* his manly vivacity and dashing eloquence, at one o'clock in the morning, after sitting in that heat for eleven hours! He spoke about an hour and a half with scarce a bad sentence. The most admired part was a comparison he drew of the two parts of the administration, to the conflict of the Rhine and the Saone; the latter, a gentle, feeble, languid stream, limpid but not deep, the other a boisterous and overbearing torrent; but they join at last; and long may they continue united, to the comfort of each other and to the glory, honour, and happiness of the nation.'

On November 1 this year occurred the Great Earthquake at Lisbon, so called, not only because of its fearful consequences, but to distinguish it from a previous one there in 1531. It is mentioned here because it was felt at Loch Lomond in Scotland, at Lough Neagh and elsewhere in Ireland, and at Guildford in England, and no doubt in many other places of which we have no record. It showed itself in all these places by commotion in the waters. It is said that no less than 30,000 people perished in Lisbon. Persons whom I have known knew persons that were there. One remarkable instance of escape was told me by the late Mr. May, the friend of Southey. An uncle of his was engaged in one of the great merchants' houses there, and was sitting at his desk when, all of a sudden, as he thought, the beams of the opposite house seemed to cross the street and almost to touch the windows of the room he was in. For a second he thought it was a delusion, and in another he felt the

shock, and rushed out of the opposite side of the house with the great ledger in his hand, so saving his own life and, as it turned out, a great amount of property; for, both by the earthquake and the many fires which at once lighted up the city, half the ledgers of the mercantile houses were lost.

I have heard that it was felt at Pitchford in this county, where there was, as the name implies, a bituminous well; but I know of no authority for the statement, and my Talking Friend had never heard of the report. If it had been felt in the valley of the Rea, it would probably have been at Pontesbury, Minsterley, and Snailbeach, and so it would almost have touched his roots; but it did not, and he knew nothing of it but by the painful statements of comers and goers on their way to Montgomery and Shrewsbury. To the credit of England, on a message from the King to the House of Commons, 100,000*l.* was immediately remitted to Lisbon; and when Southey resided there it was not forgotten.

Walpole writes to Montagu, November 25:—'There is a most dreadful account of an earthquake in Lisbon, but several people will not believe it. There have been lately such earthquakes and water-quakes and rocks rent and other strange phenomena that one would think the world exceedingly out of repair.' Pretty much in the same style, flippantly, if not scoffingly, writes Lord Chesterfield:—'Besides these discords and misfortunes we live here in dread of two others of a very different kind—an invasion from France and a *bricole* of the earthquake at Lisbon. For myself I cannot say that I have any great apprehensions of either, but of the two I have more faith in the earthquake than in the invasion. France has too often experienced the futility of those attempts.'

About this time, my Talking Friend told me, a good many new shrubs were introduced and planted in the neighbourhood; amongst others, the arbutus, the bay, and the Weymouth pine; but neither the bay nor the arbutus throve well, and the former was an entire failure out-of-doors. The oldest bay I seem to recollect is at Longden, where my brother has built his new house, and I hope it has not been cut down by reckless workmen. Larches also, as well as silver firs, were planted to some extent, but it was not till

early in the present century that they were planted by thousands.

The spring of 1756 was cold and ungenial, and May Hill was climbed up and Old May Day past before there was any warmth in the air. To Walpole writes Mann, May 27th: 'Our summer, which nobody but the almanack has the confidence to say is not winter, is so cold that he' (that is, Sir H. Mann's invalid brother) 'does not advance at all.' Later in the year there were great rains, and the summer floods in the valley disturbed the eels before their time, and their heads were turned downwards towards the Severn early in the end of August. The result was that the harvest was got in badly, and the price of bread rose quickly. Writing on August 28 to his friend Montagu, Walpole confirms what my Talking Friend told me :—'My castle, like a little ark, is surrounded with many waters, and yesterday morning I saw the Blues wade half-way up their horses through Teddington Lane.' Such was the state of things at Strawberry Hill.

What chiefly concerned this county and neighbourhood this year was the insurrection of the colliers, caused, it was said, by the regraters, forestallers, and engrossers (that is, the wholesale purchasers and hoarders-up of goods). Nor was this insurrection confined to the old county, but extended to Warwickshire, Staffordshire, the Forest of Dean, and Cumberland. It is thus alluded to in the pages of Phillips :—'Thirty-seven colliers were brought to gaol for robbing and committing outrages in the county, it being a time of scarcity for all kinds of provisions. Four died in gaol, ten were condemned, whereof two were executed and the rest pardoned.' Our historians tell us that the trial took place at the Spring Assizes of 1757, and they give in a note the bold and merciful conduct of Mr. Lake of the Vineyard, the deputy-sheriff to Sir John Charlton of Apsley Castle, in disobeying orders and saving so many lives, for which he received the approbation of the King and the thanks of the judges.

Perhaps it was fortunate that the miners this year were much taken up with the experiments of Abraham Darley at Coalbrookdale, who began to use coke for charcoal in the smelting of iron, and much was said all about the country of

'Horsehay's work.' No doubt it kept their hands from meddling in mischief. My Talking Friend said that this use of coal was a great saving to the woods, and was pleased that many a tree would escape. It was formerly the wood question; before long it will be the coal one, for as in former days the furnaces in Sussex were blown out when the wood finished, so must they be in the north when the coal fails. The reader will see a curious complaint of the nymph of the woods in the seventeenth song of Drayton's 'Polyolbion,' and it is quite worth referring to.

My Talking Friend told me that this was a marvellously hot summer, and that for the months of June and July scarcely any waters rippled over the pebbly shallows of the Rea. In its deeper pools, at the height of the heat, the people could hear the loud blobs of the leather-mouthed chub as they swallowed the flies that fell from the willows. All along the roads the blackbirds and thrushes had broken the few snails they could find for food. 'For how many years,' asks Horace Walpole, 'shall we have to talk of the summer of 'fifty-seven?'

Under July 16 he writes to Montagu:—'The weather has been so hot, and we are so unused to it, that nobody knew how to behave themselves; even Mr. Bentley has done shivering.' In another letter, under 26th, he suggests that the sweating sickness was only a hot summer like this. He had himself suffered, and thought at one time he should have lost his eyesight, for he must have given himself 'Florentine airs' in the hot weather by lying with his window open and on the ground without his waistcoat. No doubt it was a trying summer.

This was not a prosperous year for England, and the people were ill-satisfied with her position. This induced Walpole to say, 'It is time for England to cut her own cables and float away into some unknown ocean;' and again, on the resignation of the Duke of Cumberland as Captain-General, after the Convention of Closter-Severn, he speaks of England as mad and undone, adding to Mann, 'You can scarcely have recovered your astonishment at the suspension of arms concluded at Stade.'

As Colonel Clive was a Shropshire hero, it must be mentioned in passing that the great battle of Plassy was fought and won on June 23 this year. It was on the result of this battle that our empire in India turned. It lies ninety-six miles north of Calcutta, on the left bank of the Hooghly, or, as others state with greater accuracy, on the Bhagrattee, a spot never to be forgotten ; and yet if visited now, as it was by the Duke of Wellington in his day, there is as little to tell of it as there is of Marathon or Troy Town.

The winter of the incoming year was the mildest almost ever known in the valley ; there was not enough ice on the Rea, said our Talking Friend, to bear a duck, and because all the pools and runlets in the country were open there were no wild ducks. Walpole speaks of our *sultry* winter, and adds, 'While Italy, I suppose, is buried in snow, we are extinguishing fires and panting for breath. In short, we have had a wonderful winter—beyond an earthquake winter. We shall soon be astonished at frost like an Indian. Shrubs and flowers and blossoms are all in their pride ; I am not sure that in some counties the corn is not cut.' The Rev. Benjamin Wingfield, rector of the first portion of Pontesbury, and buried there in 1763, being incumbent also of St. Mary's, Shrewsbury, had constantly to pass and repass this way, and he stated that he had never recollected so mild a season ; not, however, that he altogether liked it, repeating to his neighbours that old and well-known northern saw, 'A green yule makes a full churchyard.'

But if the winter of this year was mild, the summer was none the less remarkable ; in fact, it appears to have been one of the warmest and finest ever known—quite a comet summer —and, indeed, there was one, and it was seen and talked of in the valley ; but it was very small, and not the one expected as foretold by Sir Isaac Newton. Walpole writes in July that although the weather was sultry the country never looked prettier, and that with English verdure we had an Italian summer, the most 'gorgeous of summers,' so that he could not bear to be in London had not duty called him to the death-bed of Mr. Leneve. In fact, he never ceased to

talk of it, and under September 13 he writes to the Earl of Strafford:—'This noble summer is not yet over with us; it seems to have cut a colt's *week*. I never write without talking of it, and should be glad to know in how many letters *this summer* has been mentioned.' So again under October 11 he writes to George Montagu:—'I don't know whether it proceeds from the menaced invasion or the last comet, but we are all dying of heat. Everybody has put out their fires, and if it lasts, I suppose, will next week make summer clothes. The mornings are too hot for walking; last night I heard of strawberries.' A thorough old English summer the people called it! Never, said my Talking Friend, was such an acorn year known, and the squirrels revelled with delight.

I may state here that as little was known of the victory of Minden, on August 1 this year, as of the King of Prussia's defeat on the 12th at Kunerdorf; but, later in the year, there was a name that was in everybody's mouth, from Cause Castle to Colcham, and that was the name of Wolfe.

> He did look far
> Into the service of the time, and was
> Discipled of the bravest.

The account of his life must be looked for in our historians. It will be good to mention here that the hero of the time—the Nelson, as he has been called, of the army—was the son of General Edward Wolfe, of Westerham in Kent, a veteran of the Marlborough wars. Here it was that James was born in 1726. He entered the army at the age of fourteen, and was in the fight of Dettingen, 1742, at Fontenoy in 1745, and at Lauffeld in 1747. To say that he was a lieut.-colonel at the age of twenty-two bespeaks him the soldier of mark.

But it was as the hero of Quebec and of the Heights of Abraham that he was known to the people of England and of the valley of the Rea. Here it was that on September 13, thrice pierced by a ball—in the wrist, in the groin, and in his breast—he died in the arms of victory. Carried to the rear, he soon became faint from loss of blood and excruciating pain, but cast his eyes as long as he could on the field of battle. Suddenly an officer by his side exclaimed, 'They

run! they run!' and, raising himself with an earnest effort, he exclaimed, 'Who run?' 'The enemy!' was the reply. 'Then God be praised! I shall die happy.' And he turned him on his side, as though he were turning him to the wall, and he died.

A touching anecdote is told of him as he was dropping down the river to what has ever since been called 'Wolfe's Cove.' There was a midshipman in the boat at the time—who afterwards became Professor Robison of Edinburgh—and he reported it. But take it in the historian's own words: 'Not a word was spoken, not a sound was heard beyond the rippling of the stream. Wolfe alone—thus tradition has told us—repeated in a loud voice to the other officers in his boat those beautiful stanzas with which a country churchyard inspired the muse of Gray. One noble line—"The paths of glory lead but to the grave"—must have seemed at such a moment fraught with mournful meaning. At the close of the recitation Wolfe added, "Now, gentlemen, I would rather be the author of that poem than take Quebec."'

No unmeet opponent of Wolfe was the brave Marquis de Montcalm, who was struck with a musket ball as he rallied his men, and died the next day. When told that his end was near, his last words were those of another hero: 'So much the better! I shall not live then to see the surrender of Quebec.'

Owing to the splendid success of Wolfe, to affairs on the Continent, and other successes over the French, this year has been called one of the most glorious this country has ever seen. Hence Walpole writes to Mann under October 19:—'Adieu. I think I shall not write to you again this twelvemonth; for, like Alexander, we have no more worlds left to conquer;' and to G. Montagu, October 21:—'We have not had more conquest than fine weather; one would think we had plundered East and West Indies of sunshine;' directs another letter to Mann, November 30 *of the Great Year*, adding in his last to his friend at Leghorn:—'Dr. Hay says it will soon be as shameful to beat a Frenchman as to beat a woman. Indeed, one is forced to ask every morning what victory there is, for fear of missing one.'

On St. Thomas Day this year my Talking Friend said that hundreds of people went out of the valley to Shrewsbury to see the Volunteers, commanded by Colonel Crawford, receive their colours. They accompanied them to St. Chad's Church, where a sermon was preached by the Rev. Rowland Chavasse from Ephesians vi. 10. The people always like to throng to such sights.

I may add that the year ended with bitter cold weather, which was succeeded by such fogs that Walpole writes to George Montagu, December 23, that he could not find his way out of London, and that he had not been at Strawberry Hill for three weeks.

The beginning of 1760 was the bleakest of all bleak times, and Walpole writes to G. Montagu, asking—'How do you contrive to exist on your mountain in this rude season? Sure you must be become a snowball. As I was not in England in 'forty-one I had no notion of such cold. The streets are abandoned; nothing appears in them. The Thames is almost a solid.'

I do not find from my Talking Friend that any particular local incidents attach to this time. That the whole of Canada became a British possession this year was of little consequence in the valley, which was much occupied in other matters; that is to say, in the still further improvement in its cultivation, in the increase of its lead mines, and in the production of coal, especially at Welbeach, to a considerable extent. As for the *Siebenjähriger Krieg*, after all but a bad speeder of aggression, and Frederick's bombardment of Dresden, which left an ineffaceable blot upon his name, the waters of the Rea flowed too softly to know much of it.

Later in the year the death of George II. created a sensation not only in the valley, but throughout the whole country. This took place on October 25, after a long reign of thirty-three years, and at the advanced age of seventy-seven. Being anxious about foreign letters, one of his first inquiries in the morning was as to the point of the wind, after which he took his chocolate; or, in Walpole's words to George Montagu,—'I must tell you all I know of his departed majesty. He went to bed well last night, rose at six this morning as usual, looked, I

suppose, if all his money was in his purse, and called for his chocolate. A little after seven he went into the water-closet; the German *valet de chambre* heard a noise, listened, heard something like a groan, ran in, and found the hero of Oudenarde and Dettingen on the floor, with a gash in his right temple by falling against the corner of a bureau. He tried to speak, could not, and expired.'

Thus died George II. suddenly, like his father—not a very great man, or a very great king—but, as Thackeray says in his caustic way, 'at least not a worse king than his neighbours.' On the 28th Walpole writes to Mann:—'The body has been opened; the great ventricle of the heart has burst. What an enviable death! In the greatest period of the glory of this country and of his reign, in perfect tranquillity at home, at seventy-seven, growing blind and deaf, to die without a pang, before any reverse of fortune, or any distorted peace—nay, but two days before a ship-load of bad news. Could he have chosen such another moment?' Without touching upon his royal infirmities and his mistresses, Lord Mahon says 'that he had scarce one kingly quality, except personal courage and justice. His courage it was that earned him the title of "The Captain," for it was not only a nickname.' To which the modern historian of the times presently adds, 'But his reign of thirty-three years deserves this praise, that it never once invaded the rights of the nation nor harshly enforced the prerogatives of the Crown; that the last period was illumined by the glories of Wolfe and of Chatham; and that it left the dynasty secure, the Constitution unimpaired, and the people prosperous.' It is surely something to be able to say this.

It may be stated in passing that he had no more taste for literature than Sir Robert Walpole himself, caring little or nothing for learned men, and he looked upon a poet as a mechanic, which hindered Lady Sheffield's getting Gay a place of 200*l.* a year.

Horace Walpole writes to his friend George Montagu, and tells him 'that he had the curiosity to go to the burying the other night. I had never seen a royal funeral;' and his account of it, written in his own peculiar style, is quite worth referring

to. Lord Mahon has partially extracted it into his pages. Meanwhile, the obsequies are over, and all are looking to the rising sun.

One point has been reserved to conclude this chapter with, and that is the great religious movement which was going on at this time, and which made way, notwithstanding the opposition of the profane or the flippant ridicule of the sceptic. Wesley and Whitefield had a work given to do, and, by the grace of God, they did it. At all events, they left their witness behind them for good.

A few extracts from Walpole's Letters—a thorough man of the world, and not over-fond of Church or King—will serve as an introduction to the few remarks I have to make here; and they fall in with this history, because in a district where Richard Baxter was honoured, and always well received, the names of Wesley and Whitefield were not likely to meet with disrespect. My Talking Friend, however, did not recollect to have seen either of them on the Rea-side, though Wesley was more than once in Shrewsbury, and, as he thought, Whitefield also.

But to introduce the Methodism of Walpole.

One of the earliest passages in which he alludes to the work going on is one in which he refers to the Duke of Cumberland, speaking of him as father, and as having entirely lost the sight of one eye. 'This,' says he, 'did not surprise me so much as a *bon mot* of his. Gumley, who, you know, is grown Methodist, came to tell him that as he was on duty a tree in Hyde Park, near the powder magazine, had been set on fire; the Duke replied, he hoped it was not by the *new light*. That nonsensical *new light* is extremely in fashion, and I shall not be surprised if we see a revival of all the folly and cant of the last age. Whitefield preaches continually at my Lady Huntingdon's at Chelsea; my Lord Chesterfield, my Lord Bath, my Lady Townshend, my Lady Thanet, and others have been to hear him. What will you lay that next winter he isn't run after instead of Garrick?' So speaks the sceptical Horace. To this he adds, in a letter to Mann the next year:—'Methodism is more fashionable than anything but brag; the women play very deep at both - as deep, it is

much suspected, as the matrons of Rome did at the mysteries of the Bona Dea.'

But truth will out, under pressure, like water through hydraulic rams, and memorable is his remark to his friend at Florence under May 3:—'The Methodists love your big sinners as proper subjects to work upon; and indeed they have a plentiful harvest. I think what you call flagrancy was never more in fashion. Drinking is at the highest wine-mark, and gaming jumps with it so violently, that at the last Newmarket meeting, in the rapidity of both, a bank-bill was thrown down, and nobody immediately claiming it, they agreed to give it to a man that was standing by.'

One more extract will be sufficient for my purpose:—'You ask me about the principles of the Methodists. I have tried to learn them, and have read one of their books. The *visible* part seems to be nothing but stricter practice than that of our Church clothed in the old exploded cant of mystical devotion. For example, you take a metaphor. We will say our passions are *weeds*; you immediately drop every description of the passions, and adopt everything peculiar to weeds: in five minutes a true Methodist will talk with the greatest compunction of *hoeing*. This catches women of fashion and shopkeepers.' A clever illustration, and will remind the reader of old Latimer's Sermon, or Sermons, of the Plough; for, as he says in another of these most racy sermons, 'The ministering of God's Word is His plough.'

In these pages it will not be necessary to dwell at length upon the work of the two great movers of Methodism; but as Wesley left his name to his followers, a word or two must be said of him. And perhaps I may venture to refer at once to the ninth chapter of Southey's Life of him—a most able and remarkable chapter, in which he gives his views, together with the state of religion in England about the year 1739, when he preached boldly from house to house, or by the way-side, or from some aged tree, as a grey-headed old man told me he heard him preach at Winchelsea when he was there.

Wesley had now proposed to himself a clear and determined object. What had from time to time been effected in the monastic families of the Romish Establishment, when

the laws of those institutions were relaxed and the spirit had evaporated, he wished to do upon a wider theatre, and with a nobler purpose. He hoped to give a new impulse to the Church of England, to awaken its dormant zeal, infuse life into a body where nothing but life was wanting, and lead the way to the performance of duties which the State had blindly overlooked and the Church had scandalously neglected ; thus would he become the author of a social reformation whereby all that had been left undone in the present world would be completed. And here it will be convenient to look back upon the causes and circumstances which prepared the way for him, and made it desirable, even according to human perceptions, that such an agent in the moral world should be raised up. This will be rendered more intelligible by a brief retrospect of the religious history of England, and this retrospect no one can read but to his profit.

What a painful conclusion follows upon words which begin thus :—

'From the Restoration to the accession of the House of Hanover the English Church could boast of some of its brightest ornaments and ablest defenders ; men who have neither been surpassed in piety, nor in erudition, nor in industry, nor in eloquence, nor in strength and subtlety of mind ; and when the design for re-establishing Popery in these kingdoms was systematically pursued to them we are indebted for that calm and steady resistance by which our liberties, civil as well as religious, were preserved. But in the great majority of the clergy zeal was wanting. The excellent Leighton spoke of the Church as a fair carcass without a spirit ; in doctrine, in worship, and in the main part of its government, he thought it the best constituted in the world, but one of the most corrupt in its administration. And Burnet observes that in his time our clergy had less authority, and were under more contempt, than those of any other Church in Europe, for they were much the most remiss in their labours, and the least severe in their lives. It was not that their lives were scandalous ; he entirely acquitted them of any such imputation ; but they were not exemplary as it became them to be ; and, in the sincerity and grief of a pious reflect-

ing mind, he pronounced that they would never regain the influence which they had lost till they lived better and laboured more.' This and much more the reader will find in the conclusions to Burnet's 'History of His Own Times,' and very painful it is. And when he read of 'the rudeness of the peasantry, the brutality of the town populace, the prevalence of drunkenness, the growth of impiety, and the general deadness of religion,' as years rolled on, and the second George sat upon the throne, no wonder was it if the spirit of a Wesley was stirred within him, and if he went on conscientiously and indefatigably in his career. 'God, he believed, had appointed it, and God would always provide means for accomplishing His own ends.'

This great light was born at Epworth, a market-town in the Lindsay division of Lincolnshire, June 17, 1703. Of this parish his father was rector—a man entirely devoted to the interests of King William. John Wesley was ordained by Archbishop Potter, then Bishop of Oxford, in the autumn of 1725, whom he calls 'a great and good man'; and, no doubt, because he had given him this advice, 'If you desire to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature, but in testifying against open notorious vice, and in promoting real, essential holiness.' It was another good bishop—Joseph Hall—who said so pithily and so well, 'Outface sin, outpreach it, outlive it!'

His visit to Georgia, in company with the Moravians, is well known. He returned to England in 1738, and found his views progressing and Whitefield working onwards from Fetter Lane to the front of his field, preaching at Kingswood, near Bristol, where, the poor colliers having been left without any place or means of religious worship, to address them from the summit of a green knoll instead of from a pulpit was scarcely a matter of choice. Well might the preacher's heart exult when he found, in a few weeks, twenty thousand people gathered round him from their coal-pits, and saw, as he says, the white gutters made by the tears which plentifully fell down their black faces. Negligent, indeed, must have been the reapers when there was left so much to glean.' Wesley

soon followed the same practice, observing on April 1, the next year, that is, in 1739, 'Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount is a pretty remarkable precedent for field-preaching.'

The Moravians are mentioned above because certain of their notions are still existing amongst many Dissenting congregations, both as concerns the Church and the sacraments, from all of which Wesley at one time dissented. Certainly he was not a man to make a mock at religious observances or to jest on solemn subjects, since he declared in his latter days that he had no intention of separating from the Church, adding, 'I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgment and advice will ever separate from it.' Remarkable words.

Simple-hearted, simple-minded, good creatures were the Moravians, and yet, like many other Separatists, their views, carried out and apart from the teaching of all the Churches which make up the Church Catholic throughout all the world, led them into great doctrinal error; for did they not say of Church and sacrament, 'He who has not faith ought not to use these things, and he who has faith does not want them'? But these were wild, presumptuous sayings of very good men, in the main, who were '*drunk, but not with wine.*' Their enthusiasm had run away with their better judgment, as many, no doubt, came to know, and Wesley saw that he was treading upon uncertain ground. The truth is, and Wesley loved the truth, and he knew the Bible taught otherwise, saying, '*Search the Scriptures,*' and that honest and true hearts would give their Word '*free course,*' rather than any mere man's word. Men, by God's grace, are, and may be, holy; but it is in a fuller and more comprehensive sense that '*all Scripture*' which calls to the worshipping of God in the congregations, and to attendance on His sacraments, '*is given by inspiration of God.*'

Wesley lived till the year 1791. He patted Southey on the head in Bristol and gave him his blessing, and died at the age of 88. Whitefield, born at the Bell Inn, in Gloucester, at the close of the year 1714, died before him, and in America, in 1770, having said, when he was weary and

overwrought, how in his time he had preached 18,000 sermons, 'I had rather wear out than rust out.'

As it is not really a portion of the history of the valley of the Rea, which had from the earliest days good honest priests and rectors, as the readers of these pages will have seen, I may here break off the remarks on Wesley and Whitefield, adding the historian's words :—'The fields were ripe for the harvest, but it was left for the Methodists to gather. A Church Establishment cannot have a worse enemy than its own want of vigour, and is never really secure but when it is really useful.'

And yet :—'Were Wesley himself alive in these later times he would surely exclaim, though in words more impressive than mine, Happy they who have grown up in the creed of their fathers, and who join in communion with the great body of their countrymen! To them the church bells are music, to them the church path is a way of pleasantness and peace. Long may they look with veneration and attachment to the time-worn spire where their infancy was blessed in baptism, where their manhood has drawn in the words of consolation, and where their remains will finally repose.'

Wanderers in a foreign land will all think of home and of the Church of their forefathers, loving all that was good, regretting what might have been amiss. 'What a loss is the loss of an old village church—in the bush, in the waste, howling desert, in the prairies, in the great plains of India, in the islands of the vast Pacific, in Australasia, in New Zealand—no matter where!'

CHAPTER XLV.

EARLY YEARS OF GEORGE THE THIRD.

Trabeam et diadema Quirini,
Et fasces meruit regum ultimus ille bonorum.

JUV. *Sat.* viii. 259.

Would'st thou live honour'd, clip Ambition's wing,
To Reason's yoke thy furious passions bring;
Thrice noble is the man who of himself is king.

P. FLETCHER'S *Purple Island*, p. 781.

The answer of Apollonius to Vespasian is full of excellent instruction. Vespasian asked him, 'What was Nero's overthrow?' He answered, 'Nero could touch and tune the harp well, but in government sometimes he used to wind the pins too high, sometimes to let them down too low; and certain it is that nothing destroyeth authority so much as the unequal and untimely interchange of power pressed too far and relaxed too much.'

LORD BACON'S *Essays of Empires.*

Nought is on earth more sacred or divine,
That gods and men doe equally adore,
Than this same vertue that doth right define:
For th' hevens themselves, whence mortal men implore
Right in their wrongs, are rul'd by righteous lore
Of highest Jove, who doth true justice deale
To his inferiour gods, and evermore
Therewith contains his heavenly commonweale,
The skill whereof to princes hearts he doth reveale.

SPENSER, *The Faerie Queene*, V. vii. 1.

SHROPSHIRE was always a loyal county, as was shown even by the adherence of many old houses to the Stuarts. But at this time it openly acknowledged and willingly acquiesced in the succession of the House of Hanover, even if it did not altogether take Hanoverian appointments and foreign subsidies. And hence when George III. succeeded to the throne he was received with open arms, and, as my Talking Friend said,

there was not a voice lifted up against him in the valley of the Rea, which had been tenanted in turn by Aboriginal Britons, the Cymry, Romans, Saxons, and Normans—had felt the shocks of the Houses of York and Lancaster, and had greeted the Seventh Henry as well as the First Charles.

The truth is that George III. brought with him a good name to the throne. All that was known of him at this time was in his favour. Though not highly educated—the reverse perhaps—he had been a quiet inmate of the Princess Dowager of Wales's household, and when he began to reign, at twenty-two years of age, he was known to be a thoughtful and religious-hearted man. His appearance, too, was in his favour, for he was tall and strongly built, and had a good open countenance—points much considered by Englishmen. Indeed, no people are more ready to endorse the well-known lines of Virgil—

Gratior et pulchro veniens in corpore virtus.

Another circumstance added to the new king's present popularity. On November 18 he opened the Parliament in person. To the speech, drawn up by Lord Hardwicke and revised by Pitt, he is said to have added this paragraph with his own hand, and it was soon bruited abroad, not only in the old town, but by the Rea-side also:—'Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Briton; and the peculiar happiness of my life will ever consist in promoting the welfare of a people whose loyalty and warm attachment to me I consider as the greatest and most permanent security of my throne.' Memorable words and happily chosen ones.

It was July 16 the next year, 1761, that Horace Walpole wrote the 'Garland,' which was not published till 1852, when it appeared in the March number of the *Quarterly Review*. It endorses all that has been said above, though it only adds to the untrustworthiness of Walpole's 'Memoirs and Letters,' 'whenever his own private interests or personal partialities happen to come in play.'

On horse, who proudly pawed the ground,
And cast his fiery eyeballs round,

Snorting and champing the rude bit,
As if for warlike purpose fit,
His high and gen'rous blood disdain'd
To be for sports and pastimes rein'd,
Great DYMOCK, in his glorious station,
Paraded at the Coronation.

The two great events of the year 1761 were the King's marriage and the coronation—the crownation the people of the valley called it, as many if not most of the common people between Coleham and Cause-Castle would call it still. As to local events, my Talking Friend had none to record, but the two national ones above mentioned created great excitement, and there was much passing and repassing of the people between Minsterley and Shrewsbury to see the rejoicings in the old town, where many of them joined in dancing what George Witter would have called 'a new devised brawl,' which the King liked and joined in for many a year.

And now 'tis daily seen in every town,
And there's no country dance that's better known,
Nor that hath gained a greater commendation
'Mongst those that love an honest recreation.

The object of the King's choice was Charlotte, the second sister of the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz—a brave little woman, though no beauty—who wrote to the Great Frederick when her cousin's territories (the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin) had been entered and laid waste by his soldiers.

As early as March 7 Horace Walpole writes to George Montagu :—'The town talks of nothing but an immediate Queen, yet I am certain the ministers know nothing of it'; adding, 'Her picture is come, and lists of her families given about.' On July 9 he adds, in his bantering way, in writing to Sir Horace Mann :—'An extraordinary Privy Council of all its members in and near town was summoned by the King's own messengers, not by those of the Council, to meet *on the most urgent and important business.* To sanctify or reject the pacification was concluded? Not at all—to declare a Queen. *Urgent* business enough, I believe; I do not see how it was *important.* The handkerchief has been

lifted a vast way; it is to a Charlotte, Princess of Mecklenbourg.'

This was that excellent woman—however stiff or prejudiced—who put an end, as far as she was able, to the viciousness of the Court backstairs—the good Queen Charlotte, whom all of my standing remember well, for fifty-seven years the wife of George III. and the Queen Consort of these realms.[1] The marriage took place on September 8, and Walpole, as usual, gives a graphic account of it to his friend Sir Horace Mann, saying of the royal bride:—'She is not tall, nor a beauty; pale and very thin; but looks sensible, and is genial. Her hair is darkish and fine; her forehead low, her nose very well except the nostrils, spreading too wide; her mouth has the same fault; but her teeth are good. She talks a good deal, and French tolerably, possesses herself, is frank, and with great respect to the King.' 'Before supper,' he adds, 'a conversation arose about the different German dialects. The King asked if the Hanoverian was not pure. "Oh no, sir!" said the Queen; "it is the worst of all." She will not be unpopular.'

Meanwhile, on the accession, and in the first years of George III., what was the state of education in the valley of the Rea and in other like spots?—a point this which has been considered in these pages from very early days, starting, as it were, from letters to syllables, and so to words and sense. Or, in the words of St. Jerome, 'Per literas ad verba descendimus; per verba venimus ad sensum.'

It was the ardent desire of George III. that the poorest of his subjects should be able to read and write; but it must be confessed that at this date the majority of the poor in this district were not ready scholars or reckoners, and between Hanwood, Meole, and Minsterley nine out of ten could only set a cross to their names, and were pretty much in the same case as many of the nobles and high estates of the realm

[1] Adolphus' account is short and pithy:—'The proper arrangements being made, Lord Anson, the First Lord of the Admiralty, conducted the princess to England, where, after a dangerous and difficult passage, she arrived in safety. The ceremony of marriage was performed the same day, and soon after the coronation.'—Vol. i. p. 31, ed. 1810.

were in the days of Richard III. and Henry VII., or we should not have found such words for them, under that date, in the 'Mirror for Magistrates.'

> For noble youth there is nothing so meete
> As learning is, to know the good from yll;
> To know the toungs, and perfectly endyte,
> And of the lawes to have a perfect skill
> Things to reform as right and justice will.
> For honour is ordeyned for no cause
> But to see right mayntayned by the lawes.
>
> It spites my heart to hear when noble men
> Cannot disclose their secrets to their frend
> In sauveguard sure, with paper, inke, and pen,
> But first they must a secretary fynde,
> To whom they showe the bottom of their mynde:
> And be he false or true, a blab or close,
> To him they must their counsayle needs disclose.

It must be confessed, indeed, that in 1761 education was at a low ebb, and the people knew but little of their government or their governors, insomuch that it might have been said of them in Ovid's words:—

> Stultaque pars populi, quæ sit sua curia, nescit.

As for schools, there were few or none in this district—certainly no Sunday schools, either at Hanwood or Pontesbury—those excellent institutions which have done their work well, and for which we are not impossibly indebted to the excellent Sir Charles Barraclough. They existed in the Catholic Netherlands as early as 1608, and are referred to in the Ordinance of Albert and Isabel. In this country Mr. Raikes has the credit of introducing them. As far as my recollections go, there was no Sunday school at Hanwood till about 1812, whereas at present there are noble schools of all sorts, and no person can be uneducated but by his own or his parents' fault. And thus the vanity of a little knowledge is past and gone, and the 'clerk' and the 'scholard' do not move about with this old dignity:—

> The ass that carried Isis on his back
> Thought that the superstitious people kneel'd
> To give his dulness humble reverence.

And thus it must be admitted that the state of education was low, and so it continued to be for many years; and as for spelling, even when scribes were increased every man spelt as it seemed good in his own eyes, and this reminds me of what the historian says of the Young Pretender: 'Charles' letters, which I have seen amongst the "Stuart Papers," are written in a large, rude, rambling hand like a schoolboy's. In spelling they are still more deficient. With him "humour," for example, becomes UMER; the weapon he knew so well how to wield is a SORD; and even his own father's name appears under the *alias* of JEMS. Nor are these errors confined to a single language. Who, to give another instance from his French, would recognise a hunting-knife in COOTO DE CHAS?' Very remarkable spelling certainly.

Even my Talking Friend admitted that the people were hard of comprehension, and that they needed better instruction. To which he added, to my no small surprise, 'We have no James Brindleys in these parts to stir up the people and to show them that talent is confined to no one station.'

On my asking him what he knew of that remarkable man he shook his leaves pleasantly and said, 'It was owing to his connection with the potteries in Staffordshire; for the potters and tickney-ware carriers were constantly speaking of this *toppingman*, as they called him; and then afterwards his name was on the tongues of the people generally, owing to his works on the Bridgewater Canal, which was a common subject of conversation throughout the counties of Shropshire, Cheshire, and Lancashire.'

And I recollected, with a smile, that Brindley, like many of his day and since, was not mighty in spelling; for under the same date we are now writing, September 22, 1761, his entry is: '*Crounation of Georg and Sharlot*;' and elsewhere the reader will find him speaking of an '*ochilor survey or a recconitoring*,' together with '*a grate division of* 127 *fort Duk*,' and '*for ye Duk* 29 *Me Jorete*.'

Such was the state of education in these days when George III. was young, and Pitt was resigning, and Loo was going to decay. And yet, looking back to the past, its memorial is ever held to by the aged, notwithstanding

modern advances. So was it with the Old Oak—so was it with those old Greeks :—

Not yet dead,
But in old marbles ever beautiful.

The latter part of this year was wild and stormy and the Rea was flooded. And so Walpole writes to George Montagu :—'My Lady Pomfret is dead on the road to Bath, and unless the deluge stops, and the fogs disperse, I think we shall all die. A few days ago, on the cannon firing for the King going to the House, somebody asked what it was for. M. de Choiseul replied, "*Apparemment c'est qu'on voit le soleil.*" The reader may call to mind how the Neapolitan in former days called a winter's fire the Englishman's sun.

The year 1762 opens with the Declaration of War against Spain. Walpole writes to Sir Horace Mann, Jan. 4 :—'The war was proclaimed this morning ; the proclamation itself shows how little foundation for it. This war was conceived rashly, adopted timidly, carried into practice foolishly, and I fear will be executed weakly. But why prophesy when one hopes to be mistaken?' Very different men were old George Gascoigne and Henry Walpole ; but had the latter read these lines from 'The Fruites of Warre,' about four o'ciock, when he and Lord Chesterfield dined, they both probably would have acquiesced in the truth of them :—

O prince ! be pleasde with thine own diademe ;
Confine thy countries with their common boundes ;
Enlarge no lande, ne stretche thou not thy streame ;
Pen up thy pleasure in repentance poundes ;
Least thine owne swordes be cause of all thy woundes ;
Claime nought by war whose title is not goode.
It is God's scourge ; then, prince, beware thy bloode.

On asking my Talking Friend for any particular local information, he pondered for a while, and at last said, with a quiver over his leaves, that the spring of this year was bitter cold, and that John Cross had cause to know it, for he was an outside passenger in Fowler's Shrewsbury stage-coach, which ran from the Raven to the George and White Hart, in Aldersgate, and it took him four days to go and four days to return. He never forgot this journey, not only

on account of the bitter weather he had to encounter, but for another reason also.

From very early days Cross is a very common name in the valley, and it is to be found in the earliest registers of Hanwood, if not of Pontesbury. But I saw that my venerable friend had something more to say, having learnt by experience when he wished to be communicative. Accordingly I asked him who this John Cross was, and what, beside the cheerlessness and inclemency of the weather, had caused him so well to remember this visit.

He replied at once that 'John Cross was the son of Charles Cross,' before mentioned in these pages, 'and that he kept up the periodical visits to his father and his relatives in London, whence he brought all the news ; but that upon the present occasion his mouth was filled with nothing but a ghost, which he called the "Cock-lane Ghost," adding that the whole of London was running after it, both great people and small, which,' continued my old friend, with somewhat of *tannin* in the remark, 'seemed to me very silly of them indeed.'

That my Talking Friend's memory had not failed him is clear from all the accounts of this memorable imposture, of which I quite well recollect my father speaking as a boy. In Walpole's 'Letters' the reader will find an account of his visit to the House with the Duke of York, Lady Northumberland, Lady Mary Cope, and Lord Hertford. On February 25 he writes to Mann :—'Our foolish ghost, though at last detected, lasted longer than it was in fashion' ; and on March 22 writes again, 'You scold me for going to see the ghost, and I don't excuse myself ; but in such a town as this if a ghost i in fashion one must as much visit it as leave one's name with a new Secretary of State.'

Within a little while it was discovered that the clerk of St. Sepulchre's and his daughter were in the plot together, and so the affair came to an end ; and many readers will recollect how old Samuel Johnson was one who had courage enough to help to appease the ferment. He expressed great indignation at the imposture of the Cock-lane Ghost, and related, with much satisfaction, how he had assisted in de-

tecting the cheat, and had published an account of it in the newspapers and in the 'Gentleman's Magazine.' It is very well known how this visit of Dr. Johnson and Dr. Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury, was the origin of Churchill's celebrated satire, the 'Ghost,' which was first published in March this year. Churchill's name will be mentioned hereafter. The following lines, half gibe, half scoff, may end the Cock-lane story :—

> By truth inspired we numbers see
> Of each profession and degree,
> Gentle and simple, lord and cit,
> Wit without wealth, wealth without wit ;
> When Punch and Sheridan have done
> To Fanny's *ghostly lectures* run.

The summer of this year, as is often the case after a dry cold May, with wet in the earlier months, was very dry as a whole. Walpole writes to the Earl of Strafford, dated August 5 :—'You tantalise me by talking of the verdure of Yorkshire : we have not had a teacup full of rain till to-day for these six weeks. Corn has been reaped that never wet its lips ; not a blade of grass, the leaves yellow and falling as in the end of October.' But in due time the rains came, as they are sure to do, and on September 24 he wrote to George Montagu, saying, from Strawberry Hill, 'I am here all in ignorance and rain.'

It must not be left unmentioned that George IV. was born on August 12 this year, and that when his birth was known in Shrewsbury there were great rejoicings. But it was a loyal old town.

The beginning of 1763 brought with it the Peace of Paris—so called from the place of its signature. It was concluded on February 10. Walpole had begun to despair of it when he wrote to Conway, October 29, 1762 :—'For the war, when it will be over I have no idea. The peace is a Jack o' lanthorn that dances before one's eyes, is never approached, and at last seems ready to lead some folks into a woeful quagmire.' However 'hatched and hobbled'—his words in another letter—it was concluded at last. Whether we were gainers by it is a point which need not be discussed in these desultory pages ;

but we all know now that on the King's reference to this peace on closing the session of Parliament, and calling it 'so honourable to my crown and so beneficial to my people,' out came the celebrated No. 45 of the 'North Briton' (in opposition to Smollett's 'Briton') on April 23, which, however scurrilous and libellous as regards the King, kindled a fire which was long in putting out. No. 45 was published on the 2nd of this month, and Lord Bute resigned on the 8th.

Meanwhile, what was the national progress?

From this date there was a great increase in trade and manufactures, and comparatively small towns grew into great ones. This very year Josiah Wedgwood, before mentioned, produced his new cream-coloured earthenware, and the Staffordshire potteries may be said almost to be his creation. Then, within a few years, the cotton trade started up in strength, like a giant, and its powers were developed by Sir Richard Arkwright, the inventor of the rollers, James Hargreaves, the inventor of the spinning jenny, and Samuel Crampton, the inventor of the mule. Then, within a while, were James Brindley, also alluded to before, who commenced those canals with which the name of the Duke of Bridgewater is inseparably connected, and which, to this very day, have scarcely been superseded by steam, there being traffic enough for both. With Brindley's name must be associated those of Smeaton and Watt. They all often saw great things before them, and though, like Peel, they rose from the ranks, by them it was that great things were accomplished. The consequence was, as above hinted, that minor places became great ones, and the manufacturing districts are now the greatest and most populous in the nation. All this, however, belongs to the historian of the times—for it was only James Brindley that was known in the valley of the Rea. But were these men estimated by the high estates of the realm in proportion to their worth and abilities? Hear what Lord Mahon says:—'The great works and the great discoveries of this period—discoveries of which it may be said that in their final results they are destined to overspread and civilise the globe—were yet all but overlooked by their contemporaries amidst

the stir and strife of their party politics.' How often has this been the case in all nations!

Amongst other names which tended to increase this apathy was that of the notorious John Wilkes, and as his name is more or less connected with political disturbances for several years to come, and as his character was much canvassed throughout the whole of the county of Shropshire, a few heads of his life may as well be thrown together here, with, at the same time, though anticipating somewhat the course of events, a short reference to his friend Charles Churchill, who, if he was one of the most profligate, was certainly one of the most talented men of his day.

It was in the year we are speaking of that John Wilkes, the notorious demagogue of the day, stood forth so boldly in the 'North Briton' against the influence of Lord Bute, and attacked the King. He was joined by Churchill, whose 'Prophecy of Famine, a Scots Pastoral,' was published and dedicated to him in the preceding January 1762. It is in this pungent satire, of which Wilkes said, 'It is personal; it is political; it is poetical; it must succeed,' that the Scots are

> Branded as traitors, who for love of gold
> Would sell their God, as once their King was sold.

John Wilkes was born in 1727, in St. John Street, Clerkenwell, and was the son of a wealthy distiller, and in his early days set up a brewery himself, which, however, he soon relinquished, as soon almost as he did his wife, daughter and heiress of the celebrated Dr. Mead. His conduct to her showed the depravity of his heart, for in his pecuniary distresses he would have robbed her of her annuity had not the law stepped in and defended her rights. But what better could have been expected from the dissolute Franciscan of Medmenham Abbey? Walpole even, indifferent as he was, in writing to Conway, October 29, 1762, speaks of Wilkes, in bitter irony, 'as spotless as Sallust, and the Flamen Churchill knocking down the foes of Britain with statues of the gods.' He was impoverished, probably, by his elections for Aylesbury, in 1757 and 1761, as well as by those unbridled pleasures which induced him to become a

'patriot,' and by so doing in some sense to confirm the lines of Dryden:

> Gull'd with a patriot's name, whose modern sense
> Is one that would by law supplant his prince;
> The people's brave, the politician's tool—
> Never was patriot yet but was a fool.

His papers relative to the rupture with Spain—the matter of which has been said to have been supplied by Lord Temple—were laid before the House, January 29, 1762, and in June of the same year he commenced the 'North Briton.' The celebrated No. 45 was published, as we have seen, on April 23, 1763, and on the 30th he was conveyed to the Tower under a *general warrant*, which, as illegal, was the cause of all after-troubles and of the demagogue's ascendency. He was dismissed, it is true, from his colonelship of the Bucks Militia, as Lord Temple was dismissed for condoning with him; but he was likewise discharged from the Tower, and the warrant declared by Sir Charles Pratt to be 'unconstitutional, illegal, and absolutely void' when, later in the year, Wilkes brought his action for damages against the Under-Secretary of State, and the jury awarded him a thousand pounds.

It was previous to this, on November 13, in the new session that Lord Sandwich commenced that unwise prosecution which created a sweeping turmoil, with the incessant cry of 'Wilkes and Liberty!'

The people had come to the conclusion that their liberties were at stake, and they upheld the agitation. Not all that was said in the Upper House of 'The Essay on Woman' nor the virulent essay of Bishop Warburton availed anything, and on December 3, when the attempt was made to burn the 'North Briton' at the Royal Exchange, they showed their dogged determination by burning a jack-boot and a petticoat in its stead—a wild custom which the historian's words will explain:—'In many country districts and, above all, in the Cyder Counties; his lordship was burned in effigy under the emblem of a jack-boot—a poor pun upon his name and title, as John, Earl of Bute. To the jack-boot in these burnings it was not unusual to add a petticoat, a

further compliment to the Princess Dowager of Wales. Such bonfires of the jack-boot were renewed during several years, both in England and America, as typical of hostility to the Court, and whilst the secret influence of Lord Bute was still supposed, however untruly, to prevail.'

Of his residence in France on his expulsion from the House and of his outlawry it is not necessary to speak in this sketch. But having spent his money and exhausted his credit, he determined on returning to London, saying (for he was the patriot and had his 'price'), 'If the ministers do not find employment for me, I am disposed to find employment for them.' But they could not come to terms, and so he was bribed off, and returned with recruited funds to Paris. Later on he endeavoured to make further negotiations, and published his eagerly bought up pamphlet, 'Letter to the Duke of Grafton,' but he had to return again.

It was not till the dissolution of Parliament in 1768 that he returned to England, when he at once offered himself unsuccessfully for the City. Nothing daunted, he then offered himself for Middlesex, and, March 28, was returned at the head of the poll. Never at any time was anything like the cry of 'Wilkes and Liberty!' and again those words and No. 45 were chalked up on every wall and door, not only in the metropolis, but in the country also. Franklin, writing to my son under April 16, tells him that 'this continued here and there quite to Winchester, which is sixty-four miles.' Such is the spirit that the name of Liberty can conjure up!

Of his further imprisonment and of his expulsion from the House of Commons on account of what he called 'the massacre,' details must be looked for in our historians. He was again elected, February 16, 1769, and, although declared incapable of sitting, was re-elected for the third and fourth times. The truth is, he continued to be the idol of the people, and as long as he was looked upon as a martyr he continued to hold his place and supremacy; nor could Hogarth's caricature and the well-known 'squint' dispossess him. He was overwhelmed with gifts from high and low and he was crowned with the cap of Liberty. Churchill

witnessed all this, no doubt, and hence the vividness of his lines :

> Hail, Liberty ! a glorious word,
> In other countries scarcely heard,
> Or heard but as a thing of course,
> Without or energy or force ;
> Here, felt, enjoy'd, ador'd, she springs
> Far, far beyond the reach of kings ;
> Fresh blooming from our mother earth,
> With pride and joy she owns her birth
> Deriv'd from it, and in return
> Bids in our hearts her genius burn ;
> Bids us with all those blessings live
> Which Liberty alone can give,
> Or nobly with that spirit die
> Which makes death more than victory.

It was in March 1770 that Wilkes was released from prison, and in the year following, July 3, 1771, he was chosen one of the sheriffs of London and Middlesex. It may be noted here that it was during the popular discussions about him that the dark spirit of Junius made his appearance—whose real name we have not ascertained even to this day. Wilkes called his writing 'The most important secret of our time' in a letter dated this very year, September 12, 1771. Junius' first private letter to Wilkes is dated August 21, 1771, in which he wrote the memorandum following, 'Received on Wednesday noon by a chairman, who said he brought it from a gentleman whom he saw in Lancaster Court, in the Strand.'

After his release Wilkes' name began gradually to lose its spell, but it was still a commanding one for a time, and then, by degrees, lost almost all hold upon his former supporters. Perhaps it was guessed that he had offered to compound at a price, and that he was prepared to traffic for the liberty which was his watchword.

It will be enough to state here that on May 3, 1782, he triumphed once more in getting the resolution of February 17, 1769, against his re-election for Middlesex, expunged from the journals of the House. After this, notwithstanding his many restless flickerings in the socket, he looked upon

himself as 'a fire burnt out,' and although elected a member of the House in 1784 he did not offer himself as a candidate in 1790, when his body needed rest, even if his spirit was restless. And, indeed, from this time his demagogueship and his martyrdom, as he would have called it, being over, other names passed current in the mouths of the people. He died December 26, 1797, at his daughter's house in Grosvenor Square, and was buried in a vault of Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley Street, with this inscription by himself: 'The Remains of John Wilkes, a Friend of Liberty, born at London October 17, 1727, O.S. Died in this Parish.' It was a simply worded inscription of a man so restless.

It may be added that he was a good scholar, and that in 1790 he printed for his friends the characters of Theophrastus and, it is said, the poems of Catullus, and that he had made some progress in a translation of Anacreon. 'Nor,' says Lord Mahon, 'should we deny him a much rarer praise—a vein of good humour and kindliness which did not forsake him through all his long career, amidst the riot of debauchery or the rancour of faction.' So agreeable and insinuating was his conversation that more than one fair dame, as she listened, found herself forgetting his sinister squint and all his ill-favoured countenance. He used to say of himself in a laughing strain that though he was the ugliest man in England he wanted nothing to make him even with the handsomest but half an hour at starting. Southey has stated the difference at three days, and adds:—'There must have been no ordinary charm in the manners of John Wilkes, who in one interview overcame Johnson's well-founded and determined dislike. The good nature of his countenance, and its vivacity and cleverness, made its physical ugliness be overlooked; and probably his cast of the eye, which was a squint of the first water, seemed only a peculiarity which gave effect to the sallies of his wit.'

Such is a rapid sketch of this celebrated demagogue's life, and my Talking Friend informed me that he was quite familiar with his name, and that there was a half-crazy man at Plealey called Wilkes whom they nicknamed 'Jack,' telling

him that he was a great man, only he did not know it. So true it is—

> The world knows nothing of its greatest men.

My Talking Friend added also, by the bye, that the Rev. Edward Blakeway, a man of great information, and at this time Incumbent of St. Mary's, would often speak with the Rector of Pontesbury and Hanwood of Wilkes and Churchill, and that the Vicar of Holy Cross often said in conversation beneath his boughs that Dr. Adams of St. Chad's could not abide the name of Jack Wilkes, but that he appreciated the grand talents of Charles Churchill as much as he disapproved of his wild, untoward life. For this and other reasons a short sketch of him is also given here; but for almost a proper piece of biography the reader is referred to his Life by John Forster and to the tender remarks of Southey in his 'Life of Cowper.' The latter, as it is well known, wrote of him to Mr. Unwin in 1786 as the 'Giant Churchill,' and as of one who altogether deserved the name of a poet, adding that he had read him over and over again, 'and the last time with more pleasure than the first.'

> Spendthrift alike of money and of wit,
> Always at speed, and never drawing bit,
> He struck the lyre in such a careless mood,
> And so disdain'd the rules he understood,
> The laurel seemed to wait on his command;
> He snatch'd it rudely from the Muse's hand.
>
> COWPER, *Table Talk.*

Thus wrote Cowper of his old schoolfellow Charles Churchill, and his words here and in his letter to Mr. Unwin show at once that the bitterness of Calvinism could never curdle the milk of human kindness in that tender heart. At this date of 1786 perhaps no one but Cowper would have ventured to say, 'Those words of Virgil upon the immature death of Marcellus might serve for his epitaph:—

> Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
> Esse sinent.'

If not the 'Great Churchill,' who rose like a meteor and

so apparently passed away, he was no doubt a true English poet, and right justice has not always been done to his name. As for his contemporaries, they seemed afraid lest the shadow of his satire should rise up and brush them rudely by. One could wish to apply to him entirely the lines of Horace, which, in part, are so altogether true of his mighty powers and withering verse :—

> Primores populi arripuit, populumque tributim ;
> Scilicet uni æquus virtuti atque ejus amicis.

Admitting the evil of his life—painfully admitting that at his death he spoke not of religious faith or hope—yet, says his admirable biographer, John Forster, 'taken with the good and the evil of his age, he was a very remarkable person' ; and Richard Cumberland, in his 'Memoirs,' had reason on his side when he spoke of Churchill as 'the Dryden of his day, and indisputably a man of a first-rate genius.' None capable of appreciating it can deny the truth of this eulogy ; and it may be recollected in passing that Churchill, in his epistle to William Hogarth, designated

> DRYDEN, the great High Priest of all the Nine !

His father was Rector of Rainham in Essex, holding at the same time the curacy and lectureship of St. John the Evangelist in Westminster from 1733 to his death in 1758. Hence it was that Charles, his eldest son, was sent to Westminster, when Nichols was head-master, Johnson second, the delightful Vincent Bourne, usher of the fifth form, and Dr. Pierson Lloyd of the fourth—who rightly estimated his genius and took to him. His unhappy friend Robert Lloyd was the son of Dr. Pierson Lloyd, and one who could not bear the drudgery his good father had done ; one too, though an 'author' in search of bread, who would have repeated the commencing lines of the 'Author' with great gusto and satisfaction, even when within the rules of the Fleet.

Of his imprudent marriage with a girl of Westminster named Scott within the rules of the Fleet, of his unwilling ordination to South Cadbury in Somerset, and of his passing to his father's living of Rainham in 1756 when ordained priest, it is not necessary to speak further. Enough to say that he

had no academical degrees and that he described himself as condemned

> In pomp of *rev'rend begg'ry* to appear,
> To pray, and starve on forty pounds a year.

These lines are remarkable in a literary point of view. They were first published in December 1763. The very different ones in the 'Traveller' were first printed in 1765. It is naturally asked, had Goldsmith seen them? Whether or no the reader will like to see them transcribed once more for his delight.

> Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil'd,
> And still where many a garden flower grows wild,
> There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
> The village preacher's modest mansion rose:
> A man he was to all the country dear,
> *And passing rich with forty pounds a year.*

A very different person this from the evil parson described in the 'Author' as—

> The atheist chaplain of an atheist lord.

And it would be pleasant to believe that Goldsmith purposely, and as a contrast, took delight in pouring out honey instead of gall and bitterness.

But to return to Churchill. On the death of his father he succeeded him at Rainham, and at the close of the same year was settled at Westminster, at the age of 27, as curate and lecturer of St. John's. Altogether unfitted by nature and education for Holy Orders, he tells us that he was unworthy of his post. In Mr. Forster's words, 'He says that he was an idle pastor and a drowsy preacher. We are assured, says the last and most earnest verses he composed, that "sleep at his bidding crept from pew to pew."' With a mournful bitterness he adds that his heart had never been with his profession; and that it was not by his own choice, but through need and for his curse, he had ever been ordained. I may add that the same mental struggle, though with reference to another, is most painfully, however nervously and bitterly, depicted in the 'Author':—

Attend his church, his plan of doctrine view—
The preacher is a Christian dull but true.
But when the hallow'd hour of preaching's o'er,
That plan of doctrine's never thought of more:
Christ is laid by, neglected on the shelf,
And the vile priest is Gospel to himself.

And he concludes this biting, withering satire with these words:—

We scorn preferment which is gain'd by sin,
And will, though poor without, have peace within.

It was not long after this that trouble fell upon him, owing to his own and his wife's recklessness, and good Dr. Lloyd, though he compounded with his creditors, could not save him. The result was that he separated from his wife, abandoned his profession, and took to satire and the booksellers, who rejected the 'Bard,' and the 'Conclave,' and the 'Rosciad,' which last he published at his own risk in 1761, and became at once notorious, within a short while startling the critical reviewers by his 'Apology' and the public generally by walking about with a bludgeon for his protector, arrayed in a blue coat and metal buttons, a gold-laced waistcoat, and a gold-laced hat and ruffles.

The better part of Churchill's character came out with his better fortunes in a pecuniary sense at least; for as soon as he had it in his power he paid all his creditors, with whom Dr. Lloyd had compounded, the additional fifteen shillings in the pound. There is no authority for supposing that he ever neglected this good man's unhappy son. Indeed, as Southey puts it, 'the only laudable part of Churchill's conduct during his short career of popularity was that he carefully laid by a provision for those who were dependent on him.'

Soon after the incidents in his life above referred to commenced his friendship with 'gay Wilkes,' brought about by Dr. Armstrong's 'Day,' which suggested Churchill's 'Night,' whom he took up at once in preference to the Doctor. But, though he did so, Mr. Forster remarks most truly that 'Wilkes had little strength or sincerity of feeling of any kind; but there is no doubt all he had was given to Churchill, and that he was repaid with an affection as hearty, brotherly, and true as ever

man inspired.' Meanwhile the opening for a great demagogue, like the Cleon of Aristophanes or the O'Connell of our days, was ready, and Wilkes stepped in to fill the place. Churchill did not know 'the cares of misfortune that had driven him to patriotism,' or their friendship would have been nipped in the bud, nor would he have written the lines he did in the Epistle to William Hogarth, and elsewhere, in such glowing terms. One might almost think that these two lines were an ominous anticipation :—

> Let Freedom perish, if to Freedom true
> In the same ruin Wilkes may perish too.

Much has transpired since his death to damage Wilkes with posterity.

The first portion of the 'Ghost,' in four books, and which has been alluded to before, was published in 1762; the 'Prophecy of Famine,' first written in prose, but recast in verse, also mentioned before in the sketch of Wilkes, came out in January 1763, and from that time forth till the day of his death he was more than a marked man ; and, thoughtless as he had been, dissolute even, was not to be tempted, as his friend 'gay Wilkes,' who was so ready to swallow any bait, whether at home or on a mission to Constantinople.

Hogarth was present when Chief Justice Pratt delivered his notable judgment against general warrants. It was on this occasion that the well-known artist made his equally well-known squinting sketch of Wilkes—the cause of Churchill's epistle to him, published in July 1763—'the most bloody performance that has been published in my time,' wrote Garrick from Chatsworth to Colman. 'With his rejoinder,' says Mr. Forster, 'such as it was, Hogarth lost little time. He issued for a shilling, before the month was out, "The Bruiser, C. Churchill (once the Rev.), in the character of a Russian Hercules, regaling himself after having killed the monster Caricatura, that so sorely galled his virtuous friend, the heaven-born Wilkes." It was a bear, in torn clerical bands, and with paws in ruffles, with a pot of porter that has just visited his jaws hugged on his right, and with a knotted club of *Lies* and *North Britons* clutched on

his left; to which, in a later edition of the same print, he added a scoffing caricature of Pitt, Temple, and Wilkes.'

Of his unhappy connection with the stonecutter or sculptor's daughter at Westminster it is not necessary to dwell here; the reader is referred to Southey and Forster. It was in character with the rest of his wild, misguided life; and he censured himself with all his *tribunitia potestas* in his satire of the 'Conference,' on which he was at that time engaged. The lines of compunction and self-reproach are well worth reading, and should be referred to, together with the most affecting anecdote of the poor girl whom he met in the street after one of his drunken bouts and rescued from misery. It is, perhaps, the best illustration of the changed Polemon that could be given, but one could wish that poor Churchill had been yet more changed.

As these pages are written for old Shrewsbury boys, I may venture to add, in a parenthesis, that the account of Polemon, alluded to in the lines of Horace below quoted, is given at length by Valerius Maximus: 'Perditæ luxuriæ Athenis adolescens Polemo, neque illecebris ejus,' &c. As for the lines of Horace, the dear old schools have re-echoed with the sound of them:—

> Quæro, faciasne quod olim
> Mutatus Polemon? ponas insignia morbi,
> Fasciolas, cubital, focalia, potus ut ille
> Dicitur ex collo furtim carpsisse coronas,
> Postquam est impransi correptus voce magistri?

Next appeared the 'Duellist,' caused by the duel between Wilkes and Martin, who had been Secretary to the Treasury under the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Bute. This was looked upon by Horace Walpole as 'the finest and bitterest of his works,' which is saying much when all are so bitter. It was on occasion of the severe wound in the body, received in this duel, that Wilkes excused himself to the House for his non-appearance. I must add that the 'Duellist' is in octosyllabic verse like the 'Ghost.' It is here that he says:—

> All friends of Liberty, when Fate
> Prepar'd to shorten Wilkes's date,
> Heav'd, deeply hurt, the heartfelt groan,
> And knew that wound to be their own.

Close upon the 'Duellist' appeared the 'Author,' no mean satire; and next to this the four books entitled 'Gotham,' a striking poem and a clever one in Cowper's opinion, in which he sketched the 'Idea of a Patriot King':—

> A PATRIOT KING—why 'tis a name which bears
> The more immediate stamp of Heav'n, which wears
> The nearest, best resemblance we can show
> Of God above thro' all His works below.

The following are the words of Cowper to Mrs. Unwin: '"Gotham," unless I am a greater blockhead than he' (the pitiful scribbler of Churchill's life), 'which I am far from believing, is a noble and beautiful poem, and a poem with which, I have no doubt, the author took as much pains as with any he ever wrote.' It is in this satire that the line is slyly introduced which speaks of the fir:—

> The fir, the SCOTCH fir, never out of place!

Next followed the 'Candidate,' on Lord Sandwich, a candidate for the High Stewardship of the University of Cambridge, than which no severer satire, as I think, can be found in Juvenal. He had said in the second book of 'Gotham':—

> Nothing of books, and little known of men,
> When the mad fit comes on I seize the pen.

But I doubt the literal exactness of these words; for it is clear to me, from a careful reperusal of every line of Churchill's, that he was very well acquainted with both Horace and Juvenal, certainly with the best parts of them. In this satire, besides the desperate and withering dissection of 'Lothario'—like Jemmy Twitcher, another *sobriquet* of Lord Sandwich—occur these lines on his friend Wilkes, whose name he loved to introduce:—

> Enough of Wilkes; with good and honest men
> His actions speak much stronger than my pen.

Nor should these very striking lines on himself be omitted here:—

> Let one poor sprig of bay around my head
> Bloom whilst I live, and point me out when dead;
> Let it (may Heav'n indulgent grant my prayer)
> Be planted on my grave, and flourish there;

And when, on travel bound, some roaming guest
Roam thro' the churchyard, whilst his dinner's dress'd,
Let it hold up this comment to his eyes :
Life to the last enjoyed, *here* Churchill lies ;
Whilst (Oh ! what joy that pleasing flattery gives)
Reading my works, he cries, *Here* Churchill lives.

A remarkable passage this in many ways, and the more so when connected with Lord Byron's visit to his grave, fifty years after, in the old churchyard of St. Martin's, Dover. *Requiescat in pace !*

Next in order of date came the 'Farewell' and the 'Times,' of which, except that the subject was disgusting, Cowper had a very high opinion. He little thought of Wilkes when he wrote in it the lines following :—

The venal hero tracks his fame for gold,
The patriot's virtue for a place is sold.

At the close of September 1764 came out 'Independence,' which was the last satire published in his lifetime. Besides the lines on his fast friend Lloyd it contains the lines on himself before referred to. The 'Journey' was found amongst his papers, contradicting those lines in the 'Candidate' :—

Know all the world, no greedy heir shall find,
Die when I will, one couplet left behind.

The dedication to Warburton, though posthumous, was of earlier date. It is in the 'Journey' that he tells of his inability almost not to write in verse, reminding us of the lines of Ovid on the same subject :—

It cannot be—whether I will or no,
Such as they are, my thoughts in measure flow ;
Convinc'd, determin'd, I in prose begin,
But ere I write one sentence verse creeps in
And taints me thro' and thro' ; by this good light
In verse I talk by day, I dream by night ;
If now and then I curse, my curses chime,
Nor can I pray unless I pray in rhyme.

Those who would see a simple account of his end must turn to Mr. Forster's latter pages. A sudden desire seized him to see his friend Wilkes, and he started on the impulse, only writing to his brother, October 22, 1764 : '*Dear Jack*,

adieu!—C. C.' On the 29th he was seized with a violent fever at Boulogne, and died there November 4. When his friends had gathered round his couch—'a moment,' says Mr. Forster, 'when, probably, even Wilkes *felt*'—and indulged in useless lamentations, he is said to have repeated those lines which conclude his well-known 'Conference':—

> Let no unworthy sounds of grief be heard,
> No wild laments, not one unseemly word;
> Let sober triumphs wait upon my bier;
> I won't forgive that friend who sheds one tear,
> Whether he's ravished in life's early morn,
> Or, in old age, drops like an ear of corn,
> Full ripe he falls, on Nature's noblest plan,
> Who lives to reason, and who dies a man.

One could have wished to have read of a humble faith and trust in heavenly peace, but it was not so, whatever his dying thoughts may have been. But if he did not die with these words on his lips, 'What a fool I have been!' it is equally untrue that he died, as Warburton stated, of a drunken debauch. Neither was he without tears to bedew his grave. 'Lloyd,' says Forster, 'was sitting down to dinner when the intelligence was brought him. He was seized with a sudden sickness and thrust away his plate untouched. "I shall follow poor Charles," was all he said, as he went to the bed, from which he never rose again. Churchill's favourite sister, Patty, said to have had no small share of his spirit, sense, and genius, and who was at this time betrothed to Lloyd, sank next under the double blow, and in a few short weeks joined her brother and her lover. The poet had asked that none should mourn for him, and here were two broken hearts offered upon his grave. Other silent and bitter sorrows were also there.'

Did Churchill think of Patty when he wrote those wondrous lines in the 'Times'? One would like to think so at least.

> Woman, the pride and happiness of man, &c.

Wilkes, perhaps, loved Churchill as much as he could love anything beyond self; but all his promises fell to the ground. In Southey's words, 'the promised oblation to his friend's shade was never put up.' As before hinted, he was

brought over from France, at his own request, and his remains interred in the old churchyard of St. Martin's, Dover. 'A short life, a busy, and a notorious was Churchill's. In a day he found himself famous; for less than four years, from 1761 to 1764, he was one of the most prominent figures in London, and then he died.' Such is the pithy remark upon his life in Chambers' entertaining and instructive 'Book of Days.'

I may add, in conclusion, that my copy of 'Churchill's Poems,' the 4to one, belonged to his brother 'Jack'; and the last one is signed with his name, J. CHURCHILL. He has dated every satire throughout the volumes. Southey remarks, in noting how little Cowper copied from others:—'If there was any savour of other poets in his pieces, it was of Lloyd in some of the smaller ones, and of Churchill in his satires.' In one of his early publications—'Specimens of the later English Poets'—he controverts a remark of Mr. Weston, in saying, 'His popularity was in a great measure occasioned by the subjects of his satires, which were temporary, but his name rests, and will rest, upon that manly morality and manly sense which are universal and eternal.' And he adds, painfully, in his short notice of Robert Lloyd, 'In our whole poetical biography there are no lives so melancholy and so instructive as those of Lloyd and Churchill.'

It was in this year, said my Talking Friend, that the militia assembled in Shrewsbury for the first time, though the Bill dates from June 28, 1757. It was well withheld, he added, because on the Fair Day in September his Majesty's soldiers were charged by some over-driven oxen and put to rout.

Wilkinson, the actor, was in Shrewsbury at this time, and gives an account of the circumstances; for it was here that he had joined Whitley's Company, and gave great offence to the officers of the militia there assembled by his performance, after the cattle show, of Major Sturgeon in Foote's 'Mayor of Garrat,' which had lately come out. What might have ended in a terrible quarrel was put to rights by the good-humour of Colonel Chace Price and Mr. Edmund Littlehales, the worthy draper of Mardol Head, who is

mentioned here because the name still remains in Hanwood, where an old member of the family—a blacksmith—died within a few years, between eighty and ninety. Our historians have given some lively verses on this occurrence. My Talking Friend added that numbers of the people went from the valley of the Rea to see the players and the militia drill, and none but what were ready—

> To fill up a glass of Joe Laurence's beer,
> And drink to the lads of the merry Shropshire.

Joe Laurence in those days kept the Raven Inn, and was the father of the well-known Robert Laurence who so much improved the coaching of the town, and in 1785 succeeded in running a mail upon Mr. Palmer's plan, which began to run on September 5 that year. We are amazed now to think how it took twenty-two hours to get over the ground.

A different man—a remarkable one also in his way—kept the Raven when I was at the old schools, on whom Richard Thursfield, well known for his powers in Latin verse, parodied the well-known epigram of Martial:—

> Callidus imposuit nuper mihi campo Ravennæ:
> Cum peterem Negum, reddidit ille, Nego.

Methinks old Shrewsbury boys might apply the lines of Master Francis Beaumont's letter to Ben Jonson to the Raven Hotel at Shrewsbury; though, oddly enough, there was a Mermaid there, which witnessed strange doings as every Saturday came round:—

> What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
> So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
> As if that every one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole art in a jest,
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life.

It is Cumberland who says in his 'Memoirs,' 'It is tiresome listening to the nonsense of those who can talk nothing else; but nonsense talked by men of art and understanding in the hour of relaxation is the very finest experience of conviviality, and a treat delicious to those who have the sense to comprehend it.'

The year ended with soaking rains, and the valley of the Rea was flooded.

In the year 1764 my Talking Friend said there was a great trial at Shrewsbury at the Lent Assizes, and numbers of the valley thronged the court, for, in some way or another, the people here knew a great deal about Dinthill (the Duntune of 'Domesday')—the residence in after years of the notorious Devil of Dinthill, who used to play all sorts of wild pranks, and hence why so called after the Devil in the old moralities. The trial here alluded to is thus recorded in Phillips :—'At the last Assizes in March sixty prisoners were arraigned and tried. Dannely and Newcombe were condemned and executed for robbing the home of Samuel Griffiths of Dinthill, Esq., of a large quantity of plate,' &c. In modern days Dinthill was the residence of the clever but eccentric Counsellor John Butler, brother of the Archdeacon.

In this year the notorious George Gilbert was in Shrewsbury, and preached some of his 'mock-Methodist' sermons—a wild, reckless, immoral soldier in those days—but afterwards, and for a period of forty years, a zealous preacher of the Gospel, which in his Saulship he had so vehemently opposed. He lived to a great age, and died at Heathfield in Sussex, March 23, 1827, and was buried in his chapel there.

It was in this year that Gibbon first meditated his great work, and good old Bishop Butler took care that a Shrewsbury boy should recollect it. 'It was at Rome'—he tells us in 'Memoirs of my Life and Writings'—'on October 15, 1764, as I sat musing amongst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of this city first started to my mind.' And, with all its drawbacks, a marvellous history it is.

All provisions were very dear in the autumn of this year, and wheat rose up to a great price—eight-and-fourpence the bushel—the consequence of which was that the people showed much discontent, the Derbyshire colliers especially, who stirred up the colliers of Shropshire.

The year 1765 is notorious in our annals, for in March the American Stamp Act passed the House of Lords without

debate, and with the sanction of both Houses was ratified by royal assent. Little interest as this caused in the valley of the Rea, it was pregnant with mighty results, and ended in the separation, as is well known, of the American colonies. It was reprinted there, with a death's-head affixed instead of the King's arms, and hawked in the streets of New York by the title of 'England's Folly and the Ruin of America'; the guns of Philadelphia, both in the town and in the barracks, were spiked by offenders who remained undetected; at Boston the colours of the shipping were hoisted half-mast; the church bells were muffled and tolled a funeral knell; and an alarming ferment generally prevailed.

Clearly Sir Robert Walpole was right when he said to Lord Chesterfield on the failure of the excise scheme in England, and on Sir William Keith's proposing to tax America, 'I have Old England set against me, and do you think I will have New England likewise?' And so, for lack of Sir Robert's good, rough-hewn common sense, Mr. Grenville lost America, for all hope was in reality gone after the move of Patrick Henry in Virginia. For the history of this remarkable man the reader is referred to the pages of Lord Mahon.

It may be noted in passing as remarkable to what a small extent this 'little cloud, like as of a man's hand,' seems to have attracted the attention of Horace Walpole. He writes under January 10 to Lord Hertford at Paris:—'The American offers are expected to receive much discussion; but as I understand them no more than Hebrew, they will throw no impediment in my way,' and he scarcely ever alluded to them.

It was on September 15 this year that Job Orton, so well known throughout the whole valley of the Rea as the pupil of Dr. Doddridge, delivered his last sermon, on his birthday, before his congregation in the old Presbyterian Meeting-house in the High Street, now the Unitarian Chapel. After this he only administered the sacrament. Owing to disagreements on the part of his opponents, who veered towards the tenets of Arius and Socinus as inculcated by Clarke and Whiston, he retired the next year to Kidder-

minster, where he died in July 1783. There is no disputing the excellency of this good man's character. The old chapel stands in the old place, and in my boyhood I knew it well, for I was at Mr. George Case's school, who was at that time the minister, and very kind to me. A few years ago I visited it once again, and was much struck with the inscription which I read over the inside door. I must not omit to add that Job Orton was eight or ten years at the dear old school in Shrewsbury, to which he presented a copy of Kennicott's Hebrew Bible.

The last day of October this year died the Duke of Cumberland, who had lost all his unpopularity in his age, and had in fact become a favourite with the people, who mourned and lamented him. But in the matter of the Regency Bill many in the old town thought that the honour of the Crown had been tarnished. The country indeed at large was distressed and troubled.

It may be added that on the return of the old county families from town this year there was a great talk of Whigs and Tories and of new clubs—such as the Cocoa-Tree Club, for example; but the Whigs and the Tories of 1765 were not those of William or Queen Anne, and the notions of many people were confused, and one scarcely knew the opinions which another held.

My Talking Friend informed me that the early part of the winter of 1766 was very severe, illustrating the old proverb, 'As the day lengthens the cold strengthens.' For, says the chronicler, 'upon the 12th, 13th, and 14th of February there fell a great snow in Shrewsbury, and lay on the ground for several days, eighteen inches deep. Provisions in the market were very dear while it lasted. Butter sold for 15*d.* per pound.' It appears to have been equally severe in France, for Walpole, writing to Gray from Paris, calls it a 'Siberian winter,' and on February 9 he tells Sir Horace Mann, 'We are again up to our ears in snow.' As usual, the Rea had even more than its share of wild ducks. Marton Pool was visited by many flights of wild geese, and the bittern was heard booming in the marshy ground about Pontesbury and in the old bog at Sibberscote.

Lord Chesterfield writes to his son on February 11:—'I hardly remember so severe a winter; it has occasioned many illnesses here. I am sure it pinched my crazy carcass so much that about three weeks ago I was obliged to be let blood twice in four days; which I found afterwards was very necessary, by the relief it gave to my head and to the rheumatic pains in my limbs, and from the execrable kind of blood which I lost.' These were the days in which blood-letting, as it was called, was so common; nor are the days and times and seasons for phlebotomy altogether discarded from some old almanacks yet. Probably the last and most determined advocate of venesection was Waterton, the naturalist. The reader is referred to Dr. Hobson's account of the 'Home, Habits, and Handiwork' of this very remarkable but eccentric man for some very curious anecdotes on the point. He always operated upon himself, and always with the greatest relief. In some way or other venesection must have suited his constitution, as it did Lord Chesterfield's, for he died May 27, 1865, more than fourscore years of age.

The House assembled this year on January 14, and it was on the debate upon the Stamp Act that Pitt, whilst he censured the taxation of America, congratulated his friends on the accession to their ranks of so 'very able an advocate' as the 'young member,' Mr. Burke. It may be noted that this is one of the earliest debates accurately taken down, and from accidental circumstances, recorded by Lord Mahon, who, as usual, follows closely in the groove of Adolphus. To be noted is it also that as this session of the House of Commons heard the first speech of Burke, so it heard the last of Pitt, for his warrant as Earl of Chatham (which was called his *fall upstairs*) was signed on July 29. As is very well known, the repeal of the Stamp Act was received in America with high satisfaction, and addresses and thanks were voted to the King by all the assemblies, but it is equally well known that the wound was only skinned over, not healed.

My Talking Friend was always a great weather chronicler, and he said that the hay-harvest this year was a sad one, and the corn-harvest not much better. The haycocks, he said, might be seen floating. On August 1 Lord Chester-

field writes to his son :—'There never was so wet a summer as this has been in the memory of man ; we have not had one single day since March without some rain, but most days a great deal ;' which Walpole corroborates :—'Our harvest, though the season has been so fine, turns out ill, the preceding rains having starved it with weeds. At least, as every resident contributes to raise prices, bread is raised, and people are very clamorous against exportation of corn.'

This it was that originated, on September 10, Lord Chatham's proclamation against 'forestallers and regraters.' He was not able to attend the meeting of the Privy Council owing to illness, but, under pressure of the City of London, 'an embargo was laid on ships preparing to sail with cargoes of grain.' The result was that the riots were stilled, though many suffered with their lives, as was the custom even at this time, so draconic was even English law. Writing to Sir Horace Mann, at Florence, under September 26, Walpole has three striking remarks, the latter portion of which is very applicable to the times in which I write :—'Would you believe that such a granary as England has been in as much danger as over mountains not of famine, but of riots? The demands for corn have occasioned so much to be exported that our farmers went on raising the price of wheat till the poor could not buy bread ; indeed, they will eat none but the best. Insurrections have happened in several counties, and worse was apprehended. Yesterday the King, by the unanimous advice of the Council, took upon him to lay an embargo, which was never done before in the time of peace. It will make much clamour among the interested, both in interest and politics, but in general will be popular The dearness of everything is enormous and intolerable, for the country is so rich that it makes everybody poor. The luxury of tradesmen passes all belief. They would forfeit their characters with their own profession if they exercised an economy that would be thought but prudent in a man of quality in any other country. Unless the mob will turn reformers and rise, or my Lord Clive sends over diamond scarf-pins for current coin, I do not see how we shall be able soon to purchase necessaries.'

Towards the end of this year much was said of Lord Clive and Indian affairs, the more so as he was born at Styche in the old county, 1725. It is only within a year or two, 1864, that a statue has been erected in honour of his memory in the Market Place, Shrewsbury. It was in the early part of this year that, with his usual energy, he put down the mutiny of the officers in Bengal, and by midsummer next year he was in England, greatly enriched.

The winter of 1767 began grimly; Walpole said it was as severe or colder than those of 1740 and 1741, but on January 23 there was plenty of comfortable rain. My Talking Friend did not speak of it as a churlish time—he had often known it colder in the valley of the Rea.

The early part of the winter of 1768 was again very severe, and the Rector of Hanwood, one night in January, was weatherbound in Shrewsbury. It was a great disappointment to him, as he was to have dined at the old homestead at Meole. It was not, however, a winter of long duration; the severity of it passed away in three weeks or thereabouts, but it appears to have done great damage amongst the evergreens, as Walpole wrote to the Rev. William Cole on April 16:—'We find that the severe beginning of this last winter has made terrible havoc amongst the evergreens, though of old standing. Half my cypresses have been bewitched and turned into brooms; and the laurustinus has everywhere perished.'

On the dissolution of the Parliament this year the new election which followed was notorious for the buying and selling of seats. The mayor and aldermen of Oxford declined to re-elect their members under 7,500*l.* For this they were committed to Newgate for five days, and then reprimanded by the Speaker on their knees and so dismissed. As the demand was for money to pay the debts of the corporation, Walpole naïvely remarks that they rather 'deserved thanks for not having taken the money for themselves.'

My Talking Friend told me that the valley was visited with an awful thunderstorm this summer, and that the sudden flood was one rarely exceeded. Fortunately it was before

the hay was cut—it is always a late crop in these parts even to this day—but it injured it very much owing to the mud and sediment, or what the country people called 'roit.' On referring to Phillips I find the following, which no doubt refers to the thunderstorm :—' *June 7.*—About three o'clock in the afternoon there fell a great hailstorm, accompanied with terrible thunder and lightning, which lasted half an hour. The hailstones appeared to be singular pieces of ice congealed together, and glutinised with dust and gravel, weighing from half an ounce to an ounce ; several were two inches and more in circumference.' It would appear from letters of the time that there were great atmospheric disturbances throughout the kingdom. Walpole writes from Strawberry Hill to G. Montagu :—' I perceive the deluge fell upon you before it reached us. It began here but on Monday last, and then rained hard for eight-and-forty hours without intermission. My poor hay has not a dry thread to its back.'

The year closed with the resignation of Lord Chatham, who, notwithstanding that Horace Walpole always doubted of the nature of his disorder, and even had made a good guess, as we have seen, was relieved by a fit of the gout.

I should have mentioned, as connected with the time, that in the spring of this year Boswell published his account of Corsica ; but neither Paoli, nor Boswell, nor his great idol Dr. Johnson had yet attracted notice in the valley of the Rea.

The year 1769 was one of much restlessness. But of the continued squabbles with Wilkes by the House of Commons —not unimportant but sufficiently undignified—the valley of the Rea knew or cared little or nothing ; and if any chance drew attention to them they seemed to be small and insignificant as the minnows on its shallows. The real fact is that injudicious persecutions were the blunders that supported this demagogue. Horace Walpole always thought that 'Wilkes would lose himself sooner in the House of Commons than he can be crushed anywhere else. He has so little greatness or talent for public speaking that he would not be heard with patience.' Such was the view of Junius in his celebrated letter to the King : —' Pardon this man the remainder of his punishment ; and, if resentment still prevails, make it what it should have

been long since—an act, not of mercy, but contempt. He will soon fall back into his natural station—a silent senator—and hardly supporting the weekly eloquence of a newspaper. The gentle breath of peace would have lain on the surface neglected and unremoved. It is only the tempest that lifts him from his place.' 'Defend me from my friend,' might Wilkes have said.

The early part of this summer was wet. H. Walpole writes to his friend the Rev. William Cole, then at Waterbecke:—'We have no summer, I think, but what we raise, like pineapples, by fire. My hay is an absolute *water souchy* and teaches me to feel for you. You are quite in the right to sell your fief in Mankland.' He had previously said to George Montagu, 'The best sun we have is made of Newcastle coal, and I am determined never to reckon upon any others;' which is a translation again of what the soft Neapolitan says—'The fire is the English sun.'

Towards the middle of July it was reported at the old homestead by the Rector of Hanwood, who had gone to partake of some wonderful tench caught in the Lincroft Pool, and a couple of flappers from the same water, that Lord Chatham had once more *come out*. And the news was true enough. Conway had written to H. Walpole for any particular news, and his reply is under July 7:—'Come. Would the apparition of my Lord Chatham satisfy you? Don't be frightened; it was not his ghost. He himself, *in propria persona*, and not in a strait waistcoat, walked into the King's *levée* this morning, and was in the closet twenty minutes after the *levée*, and was to go out of town to-night again. The Deuce is in it if this is not news.'

Later on in this year a name of mightier import than that of John Wilkes, though his was pregnantly great with mischief, began to be bruited abroad in the old town, and in the county at large, reaching even to the old homestead. 'A new knight,' are the words of Lord Mahon, 'entered the lists with his visor down, and with several devices on his shield, but whose arm was guided with inborn vigour and whose lance was poised with most malignant skill. Even now the dark shadow of JUNIUS looms across that period of our

annals with a grandeur no doubt much enhanced and heightened by the mystery. To solve that mystery has since employed the most patient industry and aroused the most varied conjectures.' And it is a mystery still, though the able historian himself, with others, would identify the writer with Sir Philip Francis. For his reasonings the reader must refer to his pages and to other writers who maintain the same view. Meanwhile I throw my mixed notes together, from which old Shrewsbury boys will cull what they like. They may recollect some of them, now far advanced in years, how that dear, good old man used to compare the memory of William Woodfall with that of the orator Hortensius as recorded by Cicero in his 'Brutus' or 'De Claris Oratoribus,' and how he laid his head upon his arms in the House of Lords and took in every word, and so reported for both Houses. Dr. Parr had seen all this, and noted it, and told it to Bishop Butler.

But to return to the author of JUNIUS.

My own impression is, though I think Sir Philip Francis' claim better made out than any, that the author of Junius is yet unknown, and so I fall back upon his own words, in his 'Dedication to the English Nation':—'I am the sole depositary of my own secret, and it shall perish with me.' If so, and unless all is mystification, this undoes what is said in Cradock's 'Memoirs':—'Many, I am sure, largely contributed to load the gun, though one only might draw the trigger.' What Cradock says of Rosenhagen and the Woodfalls may be seen in subsequent portions of those odd volumes. Rosenhagen was a Fellow of St. John's, and, Mr. Crawford thought, 'an occasional negotiator.' Woodfall himself said 'he never had any particular author.'

The first letters seem to have appeared in April 1767, under the various signatures of Mnemon, Atticus, and Brutus. 'It does not appear, however,' says Lord Mahon, 'that these letters (excepting only some with the signature of Lucius, which were published in the autumn of 1768) attracted the public attention to any unusual extent, though by no means wanting in ability or, still less, in acrimony.' As is well known, their authorship has been disputed, but they are now, on the authority of the archives at Stowe, admitted to be genuine.

It was on January 21, 1769, that the novel signature of Junius appeared in a letter addressed 'To the printer of the "Public Advertiser,"' and between this date and May 1772, sixty-nine letters appeared under it. 'In him,' writes Adolphus, 'the Ministry found a severe and formidable censor; his information was extensive and minute, and applied to many objects which were supposed to be secret. He detailed without scruple or delicacy all the facts in his possession, and often supplied a deficiency of information by bold conjecture or shameless fiction. His writings were distinguished by energy of thought, perspicuity of style, felicity of illustration, and brilliancy of wit; but his wit was scurrilous and malignant, wounding, without remorse, the honour of a gentleman, the feelings of a father, and the dignity of the sovereign.'

The latter words refer, of course, to the notorious letter, the 'Address to the King,' which appeared on December 19. The first mention of Junius by Horace Walpole is under April 17 this year, when he tells George Montagu to use alum for his teeth, because it has so fortified his 'that they are as strong as the pen of Junius.' Relative to the 'Address to the King' he writes to Sir Horace Mann, December 31:—'The licentiousness of abuse surpasses all example. The most savage massacre of private characters passes for sport; but we have lately had an attack made on the King himself, exceeding the "North Briton."' Such a paper has been printed by the famous 'Junius,' whoever he is, 'that it could scarce have been written before Charles I. was in Carisbrooke Castle.'

The conversation following from Boswell must not be omitted.

'Talking of the wonderful concealment of the author of the celebrated letters signed Junius, he said:—"I should have believed Burke to be Junius, because I know no man but Burke who is capable of writing those letters; but Burke spontaneously denied it to me. The case would be different had I asked him if he was the author; a man so questioned as to an anonymous publication may think he has a right to deny it." It is in his pamphlet, 'Thoughts on the late Transactions

respecting the Falkland Islands,' 1771, that Dr. Johnson breaks a lance on this 'boasted formidable hero,' as Boswell calls Junius. Those who have read Johnson's works will know the power of his pen, as well as that of the pen of Junius. The letter of the latter, to which Johnson replied, in aid of the Ministry, and indeed engaged by them, is dated January 30, 1771.

The late kind-hearted Sir Henry W. W. Wynn told me at Copenhagen that the secret would die with the Right Hon. T. Grenville. He, as it is stated in the 'Diaries of a Lady of Quality,' said that Junius was not one of the persons to whom the letters had been popularly ascribed. The impression left upon the mind of Miss Wynn's sister, after a conversation with the late T. Grenville, was 'that Lord Temple was the man. If so, he must have had an amanuensis in the secret, for the hand of a Secretary of State must have been too well known in all its manner not to have been discovered.' My own opinion is, I confess, unshaken, and I do not think the author of Junius is known.

I end these few desultory notes with Junius' last letter to Woodfall. It is dated January 19, 1773, and is remarkable: 'I have seen the signals thrown out for your old friend and correspondent. Be assured that I have had good reason for not complying with them. In the present state of things, if I were to write again, I must be as silly as any of the horned cattle that ran mad through the city, or as any of your wise aldermen. I meant the cause and the public. Both are given up. I feel for the powers of this country when I see that there are not ten men in it who will unite and stand together upon any one question. But it is all alike, vile and contemptible; *you* have never flinched that I know of, and I shall always rejoice to hear of your prosperity. If you have anything to communicate (of moment to yourself), you may use the last address and give a hint.' To this Henry Sampson Woodfall replied on March 7, and it appears to be the last communication between them.

In the diaries just above referred to there is a curious passage upon the primitive way of travelling then much used by ladies—on the pillion. On this I questioned my old friend,

who told me that these pillions were always used in Shropshire by the ladies when they went on out-of-the-way visits through cross-lanes, and that they were just the same as were used at the old homestead in my boyhood.

The next year's session of Parliament—1770, that is—and because the murrain among the cattle was specially alluded to in the royal speech, was nicknamed the 'Horned Cattle Session'; and under February 14 Junius wrote to the Duke of Grafton, saying that the speech, instead of the explicit fairness and decision of a king, gave us nothing but the misery of a poor grazier and the whining piety of a Methodist.'

Those who study parliamentary debates will find that it was upon this occasion that Lord Chatham reappeared. But his well-known speech need only be alluded to here, touching upon American independence, the unwise proceedings of the House relative to Wilkes, and his grand burst of eloquence on the 'Nullus Liber Homo' of the Barons—'uncouth words, and sounding but poorly in the ears of scholars; but they have a meaning which interests us all: these three words are worth all the classics.'

It was on the second debate on January 10 that the first notice of Charles James Fox as a debater is reported. It was later—on the 22nd—that Lord Chatham delivered his sentiments on reform, which was 'to infuse a portion of new health into the Constitution,' defending at the same time the small boroughs:—'In my judgment, my lords, these small boroughs, corrupt as they are, must be considered as the natural infirmity of the Constitution. The limb is mortified, but the amputation might be death.'

An old sailor on the tramp towards the end of this year told the Rector of Hanwood that the most fertile spot on the Falkland Islands was no better than the worst part of Ponsert Hill. I am reminded of it, as the debates on the reopening of Parliament turned on the discussion which has been alluded to before. Adolphus has given a sorry account of their barrenness, collected from such authorities as were at hand. In March 1833 and 1834 the *Beagle* visited these islands, and the reader is referred to the 'Voyage of Researches,' &c. by my pleasant old schoolfellow Charles

Darwin. He may like to have before him the extract which follows :—'The theatre is worthy of the scenes acted upon it. An undulating land, with a desolate and a wretched aspect, is everywhere covered by a peaty and wiry grass of one monotonous brown colour. Here and there a peak or ridge of grey quartz rock breaks through the smooth surface. Everyone has heard of the climate of these regions ; it may be compared to that which is experienced at the height of between one and two thousand feet on the mountains of North Wales, having, however, less sunshine and less frost, but more wind and rain.' The whole account but attests its barrenness, which has been lately corroborated by a sailor-parishioner of my own who has just returned home. He was wrecked there, but he and a companion contrived to get a good deal out of what was cast ashore, having besides some money of their own, which, when things came to the worst, they had tied round their waists. Here they resided for some time, set up a store, and prospered. I could not pick out the immediate locality. But the place was too desolate even for adventurers in search of fortune, and at the end of five years they left it. All I could pick out from the sailor-boy was that he would like to keep the little he had made. Might, he said, made right there, and their money was only their own as long as they could keep it.

Mr. Grenville died in the autumn of this year, and had he lived would probably, though the author of the Stamp Act, have voted in favour of remitting all American taxes. Such, at least, are the words quoted by Lord Mahon from the Cavendish debates :—'Nothing could ever induce me to tax America again but the united consent of King, Lords, and Commons, supported by the united voice of the people of England. I will never lend my hand towards forging chains for America, lest in so doing I forge them for myself.'

My Talking Friend used to tell of a curious old clerk of Hanwood who lived in those days, but I forget his name. He was both wag and humourist, and temperance, if not abstinence, was what he was doomed to at last, for his health would not latterly allow even of feeble beer. Once a week he went to Shrewsbury, and then, he said, he could enjoy his

favourite beverage of 'saloop,' counselling sobriety to his neighbours. But, continued my Talking Friend, there was always a waggish twinkle in the corner of his quick, intelligent eye as he repeated the lines which in those days were commonly inscribed within the lips of the Old Compasses :—

Keep within compass,
And then you'll be sure
To avoid many troubles
Which others endure.

Poor old soul! he was then quite unequal either to feeble or strong beer such as he enjoyed formerly at the Lea Cross or at the Cock.

Perhaps my readers may never have heard about 'saloop,' or, as natives of the old town would sometimes call it, 'salop.' But even in my schooldays—as late certainly as 1818—there was a saloop shop there, as my pleasant old schoolfellow, the Rev. F. Gretton, will well recollect; for there was written up in large letters—

'SALOOP SOLD HERE.'

The following explanatory extract may be found in the 'History of Signboards' under the head of Mount Pleasant :—'There is said to be a mountain of that name in America, which obtained some celebrity from being the locality on which the sassafras (*Orchis mascula*) was gathered, the plant which produces the saloop. This drink came in vogue at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Rider's coffee-house in Fleet Street was the first respectable house where it was sold.'

The only political news that reached the valley at this time appears to have been about Wilkes. Indeed, my Talking Friend said that whenever the Rectors of Hanwood and Pontesbury met beneath his shade they were sure to be talking of this celebrated firebrand—all of which corroborates the frequent reference to him still in the Walpole correspondence. So he writes to Mann, April 26: 'Wilkes is the only gunpowder that makes an explosion.' May 8: 'Though he

has his rebels like other monarchs, he triumphs over the Government and the House of Commons.' June 19: 'Wilkes' canvass for sheriff just stands in the place of a considerable horse race.' The passage which follows is quite a *locus classicus*, and must be quoted at length. July 6: 'Wilkes is another phœnix revived from his own ashes. He was sunk—it was all over with him—but the ministers, too precipitately hurrying to bury him alive, blew up the embers, and he is again as formidable as ever; and, what will seem worse, he must go into the very Closet, whenever the fates send him thither with a message. You and I, and all very wise men, laugh at luck and fatality and such essences as we know do not exist; but pray let us confess honestly that we cannot wonder if the unilluminated populace are staggered on some occasions. Does there not seem to be a fatality when they meddle with that man? Does not he always rise higher for their attempting to overwhelm him? What instance is there of such a demagogue subsisting and maintaining a war against a king, ministry, courts of law, a whole legislature, and all Scotland, for nine years together? Masaniello did not, I think, last five days. Wilkes, in prison, is chosen member of Parliament, and then alderman of London. His colleagues betray him, desert him, expose him, and he becomes sheriff of London. I believe if he was to be hanged he would be made King of England—I don't think King of Great Britain, for the Scots hate him too much.'

Meanwhile, though all in the valley was quiet, there were great men moving on the political stage. Amongst others there was Thurlow, of whom young Charles Fox, the meteor of those days, said, 'No man ever yet was, or could be, so wise as Thurlow looked.' The legal giant of those days, of whom Johnson said, 'When I am to meet him I would like to know a day before,' and who Lord Campbell saw bowed down—but a giant still in massive, commanding form—as he entered the House of Lords in 1802. How one would like to have seen the able, drowsy, good-natured, clever Lord North sitting between Thurlow and Wedderburn, taking his pleasant nap and suddenly waking up with a nudge from one or the other, alive to everything!

It was early in the year 1772—Monday night, February 17—that my Talking Friend said he was much shaken and disturbed at his roots. He was afterwards given to understand that it was from the shock of an earthquake. It appears to have been more or less local.

Many old families on the Rea showed considerable feeling for the King's troubles at this time, which resulted in the Marriage Act, by which every prince or princess, the descendant of George II., except only the issue of princesses married abroad, was prohibited from marrying until the age of twenty-five without the King's consent, &c. There were divided opinions as to the Bill, which Dr. Johnson disapproved of; but the cause of his objection is not altogether clear. No wonder it afforded amusement to the wits of the day, though the epigram dates later.

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It is remarkable that Walpole says he would rather have redressed the grievances of Ireland, and have devoted 'an hundred hours' to their misfortunes, 'than in framing Acts against marriage,' hitting indeed a right key. But we must recollect that he, as concerned the Duke of Gloucester, was an interested person, his niece being the Duke's wife. On the occasion of the Young Pretender's marriage at this time to a princess of Stolberg, he writes to Mann :—'A Fitz-Pretender is an excellent continuation of the patriarchal line. Mr. Chute says when the royal family are prevented from marrying it is a right time for the Stuarts to marry.'

Amongst other little matters my Talking Friend said that the summer of this year was the finest of the century, and that, old as he was, his midsummer shoots were not to be despised, and that his acorns would have comforted the hearts of the ancient Britons. Nor had his memory failed him, for under July 23 Walpole writes to Mann :—'We have had the only perfect summer I ever remember; hot, fine, and still very warm, without a drop of rain. Our verdure suffers, and so do the poor cows, but I have fretted over so many deluges that I cannot help enjoying these halcyon days. They are indeed in all senses halcyon.' Again, under August 3 :—'We have had and have the *summerest* summer that I have known these hundred years. We had really

begun to fancy that some comet had brushed us a little out of the sun's way.'

The flannel and Welsh-cloth trade in Shrewsbury has been referred to more than once in these pages. The anecdote following—in which perhaps 'market-hall' should be read for 'town-hall'—from Boswell's 'Life of Johnson' comes under this year:—'A learned gentleman who, in the course of conversation, wished to inform us of this simple fact, that the counsel upon the circuit of Shrewsbury were much bitten by fleas, took, I suppose, seven or eight minutes in relating it circumstantially. He in a plenitude of phrases told us that large bales of woollen-cloth were lodged in the town-hall; that by reason of this fleas nestled there in prodigious numbers; that the lodgings of the counsel were near the town-hall; and that those little animals moved from place to place with wonderful agility. Johnson sat in great impatience till the gentleman had finished his tedious narrative, and then burst out (playfully, however), "It is a pity, sir, that you have not seen a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time that a lion must have served you a twelvemonth."'

As he had relatives in the valley it may be mentioned in this place that the 'Shrewsbury Chronicle' was first published in November this year by Mr. Thomas Wood, the publisher of Phillips' 'History of Shrewsbury,' so often referred to in these pages. He died April 7, 1801. The 'Salopian Journal' was published many years later—in January 1794.

In these days the hero of Styche's name—out of Shropshire called the hero of Plassy—began to be doubtfully spoken of, as in a letter of Walpole's to Mann:—'The East Indies are going to be another spot of contention. Such a scene of tyranny and plunder has been opened as makes one shudder. *The heaven-born hero*, Lord Clive, seems to be Plutus, the demon who does not give but engrosses riches. There is a letter from one of his associates to their Great Mogul in which *our Christian* expresses himself with tenderness for the interests of the Mahometan religion. We are Spaniards in our lust for gold, and Dutch in our delicacy of obtaining it.' To which he adds in a later letter, March 5: 'The groans of India have mounted to heaven, when the

heaven-born General, Lord Clive, will certainly be disavowed. Oh, my dear sir! we have outdone the Spaniards in Peru.' Such were the mutterings in the distance.

The year 1773, writes Lord Mahon, 'is memorable for the measure which, in its result, though certainly not in its intention, estranged the North American colonies from England.' In this same year the new word CAUCUS was likewise imported, which turned up quite fresh in 1866, insomuch as to be unintelligible to many readers of the 'Times.' The derivation of it is doubtful, but it implies a cabal, or private meeting, and is not improbably a corruption of the word 'caulker,' as many connected with the shipping business were constituent members. The painful episode of Dr. Franklin and the private letters of Mr. Thomas Whateley with Thomas Hutchinson, the Governor, and Andrew Oliver, the Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, caused no commotion in the valley, and the Rea murmured over the pebbles as softly and as musically as if all the world were at peace. And yet

> It was as if an earthquake rent
> The hearthstones of a continent.

It was in this year that the maturing storm burst on the head of Lord Clive, the accounts of which must be picked up from the historians of the time. As is well known, he was stoutly defended by Wedderburne, who, in answer to the question, 'Where such oppressions and tyranny were to be found as were practised in Bengal?' said, 'In the democratical tyranny of an Athenian mob, envious of every great and noble name, taking off one for his wealth, banishing another for his family, and a third for his fame. This detestable spirit occasioned real tyranny, and we are now following the example.'

Very different was Walpole's view, who writes to Mann, May 29, with bitter irony:—'He is as white as snow. The censure was rejected, and even a vote of applause passed. Cortez and his captains were not more spotless heroes.' Our position in India will not certainly bear investigation on all points; in some points there is a painful parallel between ourselves there and the Spaniards

in Mexico; but Lord Clive was no common man, and was never guilty of many of the barbarities attached to his name. His end—by his 'own hand,' at his house in Berkeley Square—was no doubt hastened by the accusations brought against him, and under an access of delirium. His generosity and benevolence of heart were beyond impeachment.

There was a sort of influenza, or glanders-cold, amongst the horses in the valley this year, and all sorts of superstitious cures were resorted to by the waggoners and grooms, decoctions of the rowan-tree, or mountain-ash, being in constant favour. Of old time, and in modern times also, the temple of Theseus at Athens had its virtues, and lame horses were led round it. The simple countryman on the Rea-side had his wise nostrums too.

Looking to Australia as it now is in 1867, the passage following in a letter of Walpole to the Rev. William Mason is quite a *locus classicus*:—'The Admiralty have dragged the whole ocean, and caught nothing but the fry of ungrown islands which had slipped through the meshes of the Spaniards' net. They fetched sight of a great whale called *Terra Australis Incognita*, but saw nothing but its tail. However, Lord Sandwich has given great Ocean's king a taste for salt water, and we are to conquer the Atlantic, or let the sea into Richmond Gardens—I forget which.' Another passage in a letter to Mann, November 24, 1774, is a still more striking one, anticipating Lord Macaulay's New Zealander on the ruins of Blackfriars Bridge:—'The next Augustan age will dawn on the other side of the Atlantic. There will, perhaps, be a Thucydides at Boston, a Xenophon at New York, and, in time, a Virgil at Mexico, and a Newton at Peru. At last some curious traveller from Lima will visit England and give a description of the ruins of St. Paul's like the edition of Balbec and Palmyra.' One of the many suggestive passages in these valuable letters which reads a lesson of human greatness and decline to all thoughtful people.

The spring of 1774 was very cold and ungenial, and my Talking Friend said that the heavens had given signs of it

since February ; for it was plain enough to hear the quack, quack of the wild duck as he passed from the upper coppices to the brook below, and now and then the croak of the heron and the shrill call of the teal which occasionally visited the ponds well stored with carp and tench. A great weather-prophet was the Venerable Oak, and not one to say after a few fine days :—

> While the young blossom starts to light,
> And heaven looks down serenely bright
> On Nature's graceful form ;
> While hills, and vales, and woods are gay,
> And village voices all breathe May,
> Who dreads the future storm ?

On the contrary, Virgil, in the first 'Georgic,' was not more accurate than my Talking Friend, and his old limbs told him what weather was to come. Had he not seen, all the early months through, the flickering vapour that sped up and down the little runlet, like a fire-drake, where his aged father stood ?—

> Like the fog meteors, darkly seen
> By moorland tarn or mountain green,
> That spread, and quiver, and retire,
> Things half of mist and half of fire.

On May 28 Walpole writes to his friend Cole :—'If you had such a thing as summer in the fens I would desire you to bring a bag with you. We are almost freezing here in the midst of beautiful verdure, with a profusion of blossoms and flowers ; but I keep good fires and seem to feel warm weather while I look through the window ; for the way to ensure summer in England is to have it framed and glazed in a comfortable room.'

My Talking Friend told me that the Rector of Hanwood lamented over the death of some poet or another who died early this year, and often talked of a 'Traveller' and a 'Deserted Village.' This was poor Oliver Goldsmith, who died in the Temple, on April 4—the friend of Samuel Johnson, the man over whom Burke burst into tears when he heard that he was no more, and Sir Joshua Reynolds threw down

his pencil, unequal to his task. It was to his credit to have been overcome like Dædalus of old.

> Bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro :
> Bis patriæ cecidere manus.

Simple as he was, the author of the 'Vicar of Wakefield' was no common man, and the episode of the beautiful Mary Horneck, the Jessamy Bride, is perhaps one of the last of those treasured old truths of romance. For her the coffin was unscrewed again, and for her a lock of his hair was cut off and she treasured it till her dying day. She married General Gwyn, and survived till 1840. I do not know why, but the lines in the 'Romaunt of the Rose' would run through my head :—

> The sea may never be so still,
> That with a little winde it will
> Overwhelme, and tourne also.

It is pleasant to connect the names of Johnson and Goldsmith together, and, as it so happens, it can be done under this year.

One day—my Talking Friend said it was in the autumn—the Rector of Hanwood told his brother-rector of Pontesbury, under the shadow of the Old Oak's branches, that he had seen a very remarkable man 'hulking' (that was the term he used) about the streets of Shrewsbury—no less a person than good old Samuel Johnson, who had done as much as any to stem the tide of infidelity and profaneness. He was groping his way about, he continued, with some friends, and evidently as inquisitive as he was short-sighted. These friends, as we pick up from his 'Diary,' were Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. The entry was thus :—'*Friday, Sept.* 9.—When we came back (i.e. from the waterfall at Llanrhaiadr) we took some cold meat and, notwithstanding the Doctor's importunities, went that day to SHREWSBURY. *Saturday, Sept.* 10. —I sent for Gwynn (the architect of the English bridge now building) and he showed us the town—the walls are broken and narrower than those of Chester. The town is large, and has many gentlemen's houses, but the streets are narrow. I saw Taylor's Library (i.e. the school library). We walked in

the Quarry—a very pleasant walk by the river. Our will was not bad. *Sunday, Sept.* 11.—We were at St. Chad's, a very large and luminous church. We were on the Castle Hill. *Monday, Sept.* 12.—We called on Dr. Adams,' &c. Such is the entry in the 'Diary.' The Dr. Adams here mentioned was a Salopian by birth and a very excellent man. He succeeded William Jordan as Tutor of Pembroke College, Oxford, and became Master in 1775. A very interesting account of him may be found in the 'History of Shrewsbury.'

The locally well-known Richard de Courcy, who survived till 1803, was at this time Vicar of St. Alkmund's. 'A contemporary chronicler,' says our historians of the old town, 'has preserved a specimen of his first sermon, preached on the Sunday after his induction to a most crowded audience, which will be interesting to many readers. He told the people that he came there to preach, not only by virtue of the authority of the king of the land, being presented by the Lord Chancellor and approved by the bishop of the diocese, but that he had a much higher authority on his behalf, even a commission from the King of kings, sealed with the broad seal of heaven, by virtue of which he was constituted an ambassador of Jesus Christ to that parish.'

About this time there lived in the valley a man who was said to have had 'no clack to his throat,' an expression I often heard in my boyhood. His familiar name was Howen Howens,' or, as we should now probably call him, Owen Owens, no doubt a thorough Welshman. My Talking Friend seemed to cherish his memory rather than not. I suppose the reason to have been that he was not simply the rival of a sponge as an inveterate drinker, but that he was besides something of a wag and a humourist; for I always observed that the Old Oak liked people of that cast. A horn of ale was his delight, and many a one he had emptied in his time. He was a man of all others to have patronised the old sign of 'The Horns,' and would have emptied Rory O'More's. William Gowen of Plealey was one who was able to appreciate his wit and did not altogether dislike his company. An old name that of Gowen, reminding us of Sir Gawayne, the nephew of King Arthur. It was an old name in this

neighbourhood, and there is a small tablet to one of the family in Hanwood Church. As for poor Howen Howens, he never had occasion to feel what old Kentish people called the 'ayenbite of inwit,' what we might call the prick, or remorse, of conscience, for he was a guileless soul, and but his own enemy.

The autumn was very wet, and the Rea overflowed its banks. Luckily the harvest was completed. 'It has rained this whole month,' writes Walpole to Conway, 'and we have got another inundation.' In repeating an account of his being carried away by the ferry-boat's turning round, he tells his friend Mann, 'There is a sea between me and Richmond.'

The election of this year in no way disturbed the valley. On the death of Lord Clive, John Corbet, Esq., of Sandown, was returned as a burgess for the old town; but the election did not take place till March 17, 1775. It has been observed that in this year the Gatton Estate, Surrey, sold for 75,000*l.* It is still more worthy of observation that in 1830 Lord Monson paid for it 180,000*l.* From the 29 of Henry VI. till 2 William IV., when it was disfranchised, it had sent two members to Parliament. It is the Gatone of 'Domesday,' and had a church with six acres of meadow. In Roman times it was reckoned as a town and had its castle. The population now is a scant two hundred, and one might almost count them from the rail.

> Diseases desperate grown,
> By desperate appliances are relieved.

And Reform Bill after Reform Bill must provide for the representation of our large towns. None saw this better than Lord Chatham at this time.

Of course at election time Wilkes would reappear, and having been installed as Lord Mayor of London, he took his seat as member for Middlesex, and herewith ends the demagogue, but not his prosperity, as has been observed before; for he was appointed Chamberlain of the City, and retained that lucrative office till the time of his death in 1797, having seen all adverse resolutions expunged from the House of Commons records, and having appeared at the King's levée as no *Wilkite* like Serjeant Glynn. And so Horace Walpole had come to

write to Mann, 'It is strange how this man, like a phœnix, always revives from his embers.'

It should be remarked in connection with this year that the state of things in America was becoming more and more perilous; and we who live in these days know full well how unwise were our own proceedings, all tending to separation. It was on September 4 that most of the members of the new Congress met in Philadelphia. Washington and Henry were there from Virginia, and Peyton Randolph was chosen as President. He too was of Virginia and Speaker of the House of Burgesses.

Burke was surely right, and in this Lord Chatham agreed with him, when he said, on the motion for the repeal of the duty on tea (April 10), 'that from the period of repealing the Stamp Act the practical right of taxing America ought to have vanished from the minds of statesmen.' It was February 2 that Walpole wrote to Mann, 'I believe England will be conquered some day or other in New England or Bengal.'

At home the state of things was also far from satisfactory, and the constant robberies in the neighbourhood of London made Walpole write in the same letter, 'All the freebooters that are not in India have taken to the highway.' Amongst others Lord North was shot at on Hounslow Heath, and the Ladies of the Bedchamber were afraid to go to the Queen at Kew in the evening. Well might the King say to the one of all others he trusted most—

> Therefore out of thy long experienced time
> Give me some counsel.

Periodically my Talking Friend would speak of agricultural and horticultural improvement, a subject he often heard discussed by the members of the old homestead, and at the present time he asserted that it was clearly on the advance, and that a new turnip from Sweden was generally approved of, and then thought would be commonly grown, even as it came to pass. Considering what his time-honoured father and he had seen, the advance was great.

The favourite flowers grown at this time in the valley

were the gentianella, the anemone, and the ranunculus in the lady's garden ; and, beyond all others, the sunflower in the cottager's. It was, in fact, *their* favourite flower, cherished first for its bloom and then for those milky seeds which made the 'rooster,' as they called their pet cock, so sleek and handsome. Imagine the indignation which would have been felt on the Rea-side on hearing these words of Mr. Hepworth Dixon in his 'New America' :—'These sunflowers of the West are not the tawny giants of our cottage gardens ; big and brazen bachelors flourishing on a single stalk ; but little golden flowers, clustering in bunches and, like our buttercups, numberless as the stars of heaven. In many parts the prairies are alive with them.' And he writes within a few pages :—'The dwarf sunflower is, in fact, *the* prairie flower, lighting up the face of Nature everywhere in our route, from the Missouri river to the Great Salt Lake ; in some parts growing low and stunted, the stalk not a foot long, the flower not higher than a common marigold ; in others rising ten or twelve feet high, with clusters of flowers each as big as a peony.'

It was on January 20, 1775, that Lord Chatham, having wrenched himself from his retirement, appeared once more to lift up his voice in favour of America. And then the world-known William Pitt wrote to his mother :—'No wonder he is tired ; his first speech lasted above an hour, and the second half an hour—surely the two finest speeches that ever were made before, unless by himself.' Dr. Franklin was present at the debate and said :—'I am filled with admiration of that truly great man. I have seen, in the course of my life, sometimes eloquence without wisdom and often wisdom without eloquence ; in the present instance I see both united, and both, as I think, in the highest degree possible.'

It was on February 1 that Lord Chatham opened all the sluices of his wrath and delivered that tremendous philippic—a most intemperate speech, no doubt, concluding with these words :—'Who then can wonder that you should negative every measure, which must annihilate your power, deprive you of your emoluments, and at once reduce you to that state of insignificance for which God and Nature designed

you?' It was on March 22 that Burke made his celebrated speech on moving certain resolutions as the basis of conciliation with America, and which Lord Mahon says deserves to be ranked among the masterpieces of oratory from whatever age or whatever country derived. Meanwhile what Walpole calls 'that vast fœtus, the American contest,' was almost come to the birth; for the first blood was shed at Lexington, about fifteen miles from Boston, a small town on the way to Concord—that Concord said by Bancroft to be 'world-renowned and more eventful than Agincourt or Blenheim.' On receiving by a Lisbon ship the news about Concord, Walpole wrote to Mann:—'So here is this fatal war commenced.'

The child that is unborn shall rue
The hunting of that day.

The well-known battle of Bunker's Hill was fought on June 17, only two days after Washington was elected General-in-Chief, so that he did not arrive there till some days after the fight. The Americans claimed the victory, as some of the French have claimed Waterloo; but, though the victory was really ours, yet, as Walpole said, 'it is that kind of war in which even victory may ruin us.' And, in truth, Lucan's well-known line is applicable:—

Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos?

As for Washington—that almost unblamable man and modern Aristides—history records his meritorious life, and friend and foe speak well of him. It will be enough to say here that he was of an old English house, and that there was a common descent to it and the Earls of Ferrers. His father had settled in America about eighty years before his son's birth in 1732, and died when he was only eleven years of age. Washington was brought up as a surveyor, but he was not to be a man of peace in his days, and soon entered the Virginia Militia.

Meanwhile there arrived in England 'The Petition of Congress' to the King, called 'THE OLIVE BRANCH,' a sort of forlorn hope for conciliation. It was delivered to Lord Dartmouth by Richard Penn—a fitting name to be '*Felici*

comptus oliva'—and by Arthur Lee on September 1. Three days after he informed them by letter that 'no answer would be given.' It was Lord Shelburne that—after the examination of Richard Penn, and on the Duke of Richmond's motion, 'That the petition was a ground for conciliation of the unhappy differences between Great Britain and America,' but with no effect on the ministers—applied the well-known Latin proverb :—

Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.

As to local matters, my Talking Friend always spoke of the glorious summer of 1775. He could not recollect that he had ever remembered such a continuance of fine weather. The shallows on the Rea were dry for months, and the millers were at their wits' end. It appears to have been general throughout the country, for Walpole writes to the Countess of Ossory :—'I have done nothing but bask in the sun, gather hampers of orange flowers, and enjoy this celestial summer. I believe Joshua has bid the sun stand still, for there has not been a bad day since December 1.'

In the autumn of this year my Talking Friend told me that an earthquake had been felt in Shrewsbury. He said he had not felt it, as he had done several in his time, but some who were in Shrewsbury for the night were much alarmed. I give the extract following from Phillips :—'1775.—On Friday night, September 8, at ten o'clock, the town was much alarmed with a shock of an earthquake. In the midst of a calm, a rumbling noise, much like that of strong wind, was heard : this was soon followed by two tremulous motions of the earth, succeeding each other instantaneously. The doors and the windows of houses shook, tables, chairs, &c. were moved, but no considerable damage done.' Always awful, it must be doubly so at night,

-When windy exhalations,
Fighting for passage, tilt within the earth.

The frost which set in in the end of December 1775 continued for many weeks and through January 1776. On the 28th Walpole wrote to Mann, stating that the winter was made for the North Pole, and that although Parliament had

met two-thirds of the members were frozen in the country. It was at this time that Omiah, the native of Otaheite, learnt to skate, and called ice *stone-water*—'a very good expression.'

Two remarkable but very different works appeared in the spring of this year—which I mention here because, however unwisely, I first laid my hands upon both of them in my boyhood at the Marsh. The first was the first volume of Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall,' which the author sent to Walpole, who thought very highly of it; the other was Tom Paine's pamphlet 'Common Sense,' for which the legislature of Pennsylvania awarded him 500*l.* I can still see the old bookcase in the little room at the Marsh, and the dusty volumes of 'The Rights of Man' and 'The Age of Reason.'

> O mischief! thou art swift
> To enter in the thoughts of desperate men.

In June or July this year my Talking Friend spoke of an awful thunderstorm which, when it burst, shook him to the roots. 'If I did not feel the earthquake,' he added, 'I felt this.' He particularly called to mind the awful stillness which preceded it. All was hush, and he did not think that a single leaf moved on his aged head. One naturally called to mind the lines in Hamlet—

> We often see, against some storm,
> A silence in the heavens, the rocks stand still,
> The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
> As hush as death.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic a still fiercer storm was brewing, and from July 4 dates the Declaration of Independence. The term 'colonies' was acknowledged no more, but was exchanged for that of 'free and independent States.' Whatever were our smaller successes during the year, it ended with Washington's successful attack at Trenton, on the Delaware, when twenty-three officers and eight hundred and eighty-six men laid down their arms. And a painful thing it is to think on now, that at one time or another during this sad war both British and Americans called in the aid of the red man—

> If so to end the rising strife
> With tomahawk and scalping-knife.

In later days the king of the Taepings said in his letter to Lord Elgin:—'The fish are deep and the wild geese distant; that mutual sounds and inquiries are difficult to comprehend,' that is, we must come nearer together to be mutually understood. But there was no coming together any more now, and all was confusion and strife, war and bloodshed—

> Created of the massy dregs of earth,
> The scum and tartar of the elements.

And so, impressed once more with the evil to come, Walpole writes to Mann:—'This little island will be ridiculously proud some ages hence of its former brave days, and because its capital was once as big as Peru or—what is to be the name of the city that will then give laws to Europe—perhaps New York or Philadelphia.' So often does he revert to this subject.

The next year, 1777, was still in a ferment about America, and twice the venerable Earl of Chatham pressed his point. First, on May 3, swathed in flannels, he once more appeared in his place and pleaded for the cessation of the war, and again his equally talented son wrote to his mother and told her of the marvellous flood of his eloquence and the beauty of his words. The second occasion of his speaking was on November 20, when Parliament was opened by the King in person, when he moved an amendment to the Address. It was now that he spoke of the traffic and barter with every little pitiful German prince that sells and sends his subjects to the shambles of a foreign Power, and lashed Lord Suffolk, in the fierceness of his wrath, for declaring that we were fully justified in exerting 'every means to repel the attempts of our rebellious subjects—every means that God and Nature have put into our hands.' 'The mere thought of the tomahawk and the scalping-knife made his old blood boil in his veins.'

The surrender of General Burgoyne on October 17 at Saratoga was of course not known when this speech was delivered. When it became known, the defeat at Brandywine (a creek or stream flowing into the Delaware), and the capture of Philadelphia by Earl Cornwallis, and the rout at

Germantown dwindled into nothing; for, as Lord Mahon says, this capitulation was the turning-point of the War of Revolution in America, as sixty-seven years before the capitulation of Brihuega had been the turning-point of the War of Succession in Spain. Uncertain news of it arrived in London on the night of December 2. The official intimation of it was many days later. The classical reader and the old Shrewsbury boy will at once call to mind the consternation caused at Athens by the calamity of Syracuse. Walpole writes, under December 5:—'We have been horribly the aggressors, and I must rejoice that the Americans are to be free, as they had a right to be, and as I am sure they have shown they deserve to be.' So far he agreed with the great Earl Chatham, but differed about entire independence.

All that my Talking Friend could recollect about the year was that it was a very bad hay season, but that the autumn was fine.

American affairs still occupied men's thoughts throughout the whole of 1778. Although not acknowledged till March 13, the two treaties of commerce and alliance were signed at Paris on February 6, and from this day France, of course, sided with America. It was on the 17th that Lord North brought in his Conciliatory Bills.

But what stirred the country through was the death of the Earl of Chatham. On April 7 this venerable statesman once more appeared in his place, and for the last time, to oppose the Duke of Richmond on the entire surrender of the British sovereignty in America. How he spoke upon the subject is well known, and how, in his reply, he staggered and fell and was carried out in a swoon and laid in the Prince's Chamber, which adjoined the old House of Lords, is never likely to be forgotten. After a few days he was removed, at his own request, from London to Hayes, where he died on May 11 in his seventieth year. The '*brachium procerius projectum, quasi quoddam telum orationis*,' to use the words of Cicero quoted by Lord Mahon, was henceforth only to be seen in Westminster Abbey, where he was interred on June 9. It was a public funeral, but, owing to political

altercations, was sparsely attended. Writing to the Countess of Ossory, February 1, 1779, Horace Walpole said 'there were not half of the noble coaches that attended Garrick's interment.' Differing as he did from the Great Earl on the question of American independence, and cautiously as his words are to be weighed when Walpole speaks of his opponents, he pays, in several places, a high tribute to Chatham's greatness.

It was on March 17 that George III. wrote of him to Lord North as 'that perfidious man,' and Junius evidently considered him influenced by party interests on the American question; but posterity has probably arrived at a contrary conclusion, and willingly concedes to him his well-earned place on the pedestal of Fame. It is Lord Brook who says in his 'Inquisition upon Fame and Honour':—

> What governour would spend his dayes
> In envious travil for the publicke good?
> Who would in bookes search after dead men's wayes?
> Liv'd not this fame in clouds, kept as a crowne,
> Both for the sword, the scepter, and the gowne.

It should be noted that in this session the first Bill for the Relief of the Roman Catholics was brought in, and passed both Houses without opposition. Walpole wrote to Mason on May 15:—'Sir George Saville moved for taking off pressure from the Roman Catholics, which charmed every soul on both sides.' But what were Walpole's own views?

Two very remarkable men died this year—Voltaire, at Paris, on May 30, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, at Ermenonville, on July 3. Horace Walpole's own mind was sceptical enough, but he liked neither the one nor the other, though he writes to Mann of the former on June 16 as the 'meteor of the reading world,' adding that the literary throne is vacant, and that 'it is from beyond the Atlantic that the world, perhaps, will see a genius arise.' Thus did he always look westward. He admitted, in like manner, the masterly genius of Rousseau, but could not tolerate his overweening vanity. The reader should refer to his letter to Mason.

As to the valley of the Rea, my Talking Friend told me it was one of the finest summers this year within the memory

of man, that it was a splendid harvest, and that the fruit surpassed anything he had ever recollected. It seems to have been general, for Walpole writes to his several correspondents :—'I enjoy the present summer, which I remember none like.' 'Has not this Indian summer dispersed your complaints?' 'People of all ages call it an old-fashioned summer, such as we used to have ten or twenty years ago, when you are to suppose they were young. I that do not haggle about my threescores do not remember any such summer these fifty years. It is Italy in a green gown.' 'The harvest is prodigious, and we might have wine and oil had we made preparations for them.' Evidently it must have been a most enjoyable time.

It was during this summer that my Talking Friend's erudition was greatly tested, and his oakship infinitely amazed by what would appear to be a very small matter, nothing less than a hare and a tambourine. So fine was the summer that the man constantly passed up and down the valley, and rested week after week beneath his shade. He could not tell me the name of the man, but he thought he was a foreigner. Nothing pleased him more than to tell of the man with a hare which beat a drum and danced the saraband and played all sorts of antics. He heard the man tell the old squire of Meole and Cruckton that it was not every hare that could learn his lesson, but only clever ones. On which one of the worthy squires remarked that it would have been useless to teach the big-headed ones of Rowton Coppice, a peculiar breed which remained till the days of my boyhood.

The reader may see a plate of the hare playing the tabour in Strutt's 'Sports and Pastimes,' taken, it is said, from a drawing 400 years old ; nor must he forget Cowper's account of his hares—Puss, Tiny, and Bess, so very different in their dispositions—nor their epitaphs.

The London year of 1779 was ushered in by a frightful storm, so as to be compared to that of 1703, and few buildings but were injured. Writing on the 3rd to Cole, Walpole hopes 'he has not been untiled or unpaled by the tempest,' and later he says that Lady Ossory had two of her beautiful elms at Strawberry Hill succumb to it, adding to Mann on the

5th :—'Old women, our only remaining prophets, except the Opposition and a little common sense, prognosticate great woes for the coming year ; from the omen of its first day. A tempest at the instant of the new year made terrible havoc of tiles, chimneys, and trees, and at night great part of Greenwich Hospital was burnt. I doubt casualties will not be the sole completion of the augury.' In fact, the whole of his letters this year are almost letters of despair about the country, for France and Spain were banded with America against her, and in the later months the French invasion was looked for daily.

The winter was remarkably mild, whilst, strange to say, Mann wrote him word there was skating on the Arno. It was an open winter in the valley of the Rea, and though the storm was felt it did not shake the Old Oak's roots or level his buttress with the ground. So, again, as regarded the political storm which harassed the capital, it fell quietly here.

In truth, of Admiral Keppel and Sir Hugh Palliser the valley knew little, perhaps never heard of the illuminations which blazed up like bearded comets boding ill in London and Westminster. Other parts of the country were excited by the trial at Portsmouth, but the sign of 'Admiral Keppel' was never set up on the Rea-side, to the disparagement of 'The Cock' and 'The Cross.' The old town had heard that the gates of the Admiralty had been forced, but none of the old Whig ladies then took to wearing caps *à la* Keppel ; and if anyone had said that a house had been 'Pallisered,' people would have wondered what was meant by such an expression, or at anyone who used it.

My Talking Friend stated that this was another glorious summer, and that the Spanish chestnut ripened as well as his own acorns. He likewise stated that the nests of the king-fisher scarcely touched the water, and that the water-ousel was never known to be so busy. Old Jeremiah Cramp was a great watcher of the habits of birds, and mentioned this to his friend John Peplow beneath the shade of the venerable tree. It appears to have been a very genial time, for Walpole writes to Cole :—'This sultry weather will, I hope, quite restore you : people need not go to Lisbon or Naples, as we continue

to have such summers.' The latter part of the year was not so propitious, for the bitter cold weather of November was followed by a deluge of rain towards the end of December.

The year 1780 opened with the question of economical reform, on all sides admitted to be needful. On February 8 Sir G. Saville broke the subject as member for Yorkshire; and then, three days later, Burke spoke that speech which Lord North said was one of the ablest he had ever heard, and one that no one else could have made. No common praise.

Meanwhile, with all that restlessness of feeling, and whilst many, like Horace Walpole, thought that the glory of the land was departed, George III. believed our Constitution to be the most beautiful one ever framed, and on March 9 he wrote to Lord North, saying, 'However I am treated, I must love this country.' And yet within a month nothing seemed as if it would satisfy the people but the motion of Dunning: 'That it is the opinion of the committee that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.' On which Walpole wrote to Mann: 'The walls could not believe their own ears; they had not heard such language since they had a wainscot.' Such was the state of things at this time.

The relief granted to the Roman Catholics has been alluded to before. Unhappily, wise as it was, it was most unacceptable in Scotland, and Edinburgh and Glasgow lashed themselves into a fury, as though John Knox himself were at their back and hounding them on. From the north it extended to the south, and resulted in the Protestant Association and

The Gordon Riots,

those 'fearful riots,' as Lord Mahon calls them, 'to which the most rank intolerance gave origin and Lord George Gordon a name.'

Of these melancholy riots, in which 'pious ragamuffins,' and a 'pious mob'—as Horace Walpole and Miss Fanny Burney called them—took so prominent a part, a full and detailed account was received in the valley, and I may ven-

ture to repeat the statement made in another work :—'The father of the LAST OF THE OLD SQUIRES was at that time in London, and witnessed them.' When a schoolboy I heard him recount the impression made on the mob by the grey-headed veteran, and I have never read these noble lines of Virgil without calling the incident to mind :—

> Ac veluti magno in populo cum sæpe coorta est
> Seditio, sævitque animis ignobile vulgus ;
> Jamque faces et saxa volant, furor arma ministrat :
> Tum, pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem
> Conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus astant :
> Ille regit dictis animos, et pectora mulcet.

As none of the city magistrates appear to have done their duty, it is clear, or nearly so, that the 'veteran' above alluded to must have been Mr. Addington, an active Middlesex justice, who appeared in the streets, with a party of Horse Guards, towards nine o'clock and told the people that 'he meant them no harm, and that the soldiers should retire, if they would quietly disperse, which many hundreds of them did accordingly, first giving the magistrate three cheers.' 'Clearly, again, this refers to the night of June 2, when the members were barricaded' (Walpole's term) in the House of Commons. The then youthful scion of the household of Meole had evidently joined the crowd, and his recollections of all that passed were most vivid.

Such was the result of the monster meeting and the monster petition. As for the meeting itself, it was held in St. George's Fields, Southwark, 'on the very spot on which,' writes Mr. Jesse, 'according to a vague tradition, now stands the high altar of the largest Roman Catholic church which has been erected in England since the Reformation.'

All my Talking Friend remembered further of this year was that it was another in which we had so marvellous a summer. All the fruits of the valley were perfected, and such ranunculi and anemones as were to be seen in the old garden at Meole were never seen before. To which he added that the old squire at Meole had a marvellous way of growing there these choice ranunculi, for he gathered and stored year after year all the soil which floods and wild ducks left

in the hollows of the willows by the brook-side, and modern guano was not so precious. The fine weather indeed appears to have been general, for on August 16 Horace Walpole wrote to the Countess of Ossory :—'A sultry east wind has reigned for twenty-and-eight days, and left us neither grass nor leaves. This is the third summer that our climate has been growing as Asiatic as our Government,' &c. So constantly did his Whiggism crop out.

On September 1 was the proclamation to dissolve Parliament: Wilberforce and Sheridan became members of the new one, and after a short while William Pitt came in for Appleby.

Early in 1781 the trial of Lord George Gordon came on, and he was acquitted. Cowper wrote to the Rev. William Unwin under February 6, expressing his wonder in the words of Horace :—

> Sed tamen admiror, quo pacto judicium illud
> Fugerit.

Johnson said to Boswell at the City Club 'he was glad that he had escaped rather than that a precedent should be established for hanging a man for *constructive* treason, which, in consistency with his true, manly, constitutional Toryism, he considered would be a dangerous engine of arbitrary power. So much for that *feu grégeois*.

It was on February 26 that William Pitt made his maiden speech in the House in favour of the second reading of Mr. Burke's Bill for Economical Reform on the Civil List. Lord North said it was the best 'first speech' he had ever heard, and Burke said, 'He is not merely a chip of the old block, but the old block itself.' Walpole, writing to Conway on June 3, augured that he would be the rival of Fox, and to Mann, on November 29, he penned these words:—'The names of most *éclat* in the Opposition are two names to which those walls have been much accustomed at the same period, CHARLES FOX and WILLIAM PITT, second son of Lord Chatham. Eloquence is the only one of our brilliant qualities that does not seem to have degenerated rapidly.'

My Talking Friend spoke of the summer season as a fine one, and he always said the finer the summer, the greater the

number of the kingfishers on the Rea. Most likely the weather was generally fine, for on June 5 H. Walpole wrote to Conway:—'Last week we had two or three mastiff days, for they were fiercer than old common dog days. It is cooler again, but rain is as great a rarity as in Egypt, and Father Thames, so far from being a Nile, is dying for thirst himself.' Low as the waters were in the Rea, the yellow water-lilies in the lower Harrisals flowered magnificently. Even to this day this is the only part of the brook in which this flower flourishes. No doubt some time or another the seeds or some broken roots were carried down to this spot from the Cruckton brook, where they always grew.

Meanwhile all went on badly in America. 'Lord Cornwallis's triumphs,' writes Walpole, 'have but increased our losses, without leaving any hope.' The victory at Guildford brought no fruits, and the battle at the Easton Springs on September 8, within sixty miles of Charleston, though the day was on the side of the English, was equally useless. At last came the melancholy capitulation of October 19, with which the American War may be said to have ended. The dispatch reached London at midnight on November 25, and great was the dismay which was universally felt. Even in the valley of the Rea, which it reached by the end of the month, the commotion was great, and the Cock and the Lea Cross were thronged with rival politicians. The oldest inhabitants never remembered such a stir. 'Is it not another odd coincidence of events,' writes Walpole to Mann, November 29, 'that while the father Laurens is prisoner to Lord Cornwallis, as Constable of the Tower, the son Laurens signed the capitulation by which Lord Cornwallis became prisoner? It is said too, I don't know if truly, that this capitulation and that of Saratoga were signed on the same anniversary.'

I call to mind at this moment another local circumstance of which my Talking Friend apprised me, which was this. The dyers from Shrewsbury sent to gather all the woad they could collect in the neighbourhood, where, indeed, within my recollection, it grew plentifully.

'A mischievous boy, a pickle,' said my Talking Friend, 'not a bad boy, would always be cutting my new shoots

within his reach with a new knife which his aunt had given him. I endeavoured to persuade him that it must spoil his knife, but he did not understand my hints. And in truth the *Isatis tinctoria*, the "woad," or "dyer's wood" of the patches hard by'—slips of ground cut off by the meanderings of the Rea are so called still—'could not have stained the steel worse.'

And I smiled at my Talking Friend's remark, and bethought me how the old Celtic name of *glastum*, or *glas*, which means 'britt,' or 'blue,' not only gave a name to the inhabitants of Britain, but likewise to the magnificent ruins of Glastonbury. Certainly the Old Oak gave the name *glas* to the colouring matter extracted from the woad. He was a quiet observer of all natural productions, and listened to all that was said on the subject beneath his shade.

Of all the neighbouring trees my Talking Friend seemed to have the greatest respect for the elm, which he called an old English tree; and in fact 'ulm,' or 'elm,' seems common to Celts, Teutons, and Saxons, and no less than forty places in 'Domesday Book' derive their names from it. The elm-tree alluded to by the old chronicler on the Rea-side is most probably the *Ulmus campestris*, or small-leaved elm. He said it dated very far back, and that he always remembered elms, though he could not say that his time-honoured father did. For his own part he should say it was indigenous, though one old Rector of Hanwood, ages back, told him that the Romans introduced it, whilst a brother-rector at Pontesbury said that the Crusaders first planted it; which is certainly contradicted by 'Domesday,' unless he referred to some particular species, which is possible. It is within recent days—say from a hundred to a hundred and fifty years—that the wych elm has been much planted in the midland counties. The superstitions now attaching to it were derived from Scotland, where it would appear to have grown from very early days. Some have confounded it with the rowan-tree; but this, as is well known, is the mountain ash.

In my plume is seen the holly green,
With the leaves of the rowan-tree;
And my coffin of sand by a mermaid's hand
Was formed beneath the sea.

In these days, except what the Welshmen brought in their panniers—and it was but little except crabs, lobsters, and mussels—there was no sea-fish to be had, or rarely; neither was the salmon of the Virniew or the Severn plentiful. Consequently *vivaria*, or stew-ponds, were much cultivated, and the modern name of 'pisciculture' is but what the Scotch would call 'an auld clout on a new horn.'

Some years later it would have pleased any lover of Nature to have heard the squire of the old homestead at Meole speak of his tench, which he cherished in his land-locked ponds; whether in the Hanwood coppices, or the Whixals, or at Sibberscott, Juvenal's fish were not more tame, nor the carps in the old monastery stew at the abbey. How he would have enjoyed those Macaronic verses of Thackeray in his 'Elegy on the Porpoise by the Sturgeon':—

> I've heard the tench is a cunning fish, and effects a perfect cure
> Of other fish put into his pond, which he's welcome to do, I'm sure;
> But don't bring sick porpoises up to me, I'm kin to the old sea-devil,
> And though a king I'm not inclined to be touching fish for the evil.

These and other like matters are not uninteresting in the simple annals of country places, and had we such small records of our land, we should have the most curious history in the world. Probably at the present moment there are hidden records in the outlying parishes of the land which are rather to be relied on than many pages of history. For although one said, 'Doubt history, for it is sure to be a lie,' it is not an incontrovertible surety. The rather current history is corrected constantly by private documents, and hence the very great value of the publications of the Record Commission, notwithstanding the shortcomings and the mistakes in some of the volumes.

> Here, as in other fields, the most he gleans
> Who works and never swerves.

How many of our loved records are at this day covered with damp and mildew; how many have been consigned to hands—whether cooks' or housemaids'—as destructive in their way as the cutting down of the *Icosandra gutta*, or the gutta-percha tree, by the Malays, who after felling it 'place

it in a horizontal position, so as to enable the exuding fluid to be collected in banana leaves.'

One day—a lovely day in August—as I was resting beneath the hospitable shade of my Talking Friend, there passed by an old man whom I had often seen, but whose name I did not know. On application to my faithful chronicler for information, a playful rustling of his midsummer shoot, just like a smile on the face of a humourist, led me at once to surmise that he had something funny to say, and so it proved.

'I dare say,' said he, 'you fancy that superstition has died out in your wise days, and that dairymaids do not have a bit of the wych elm inserted in their churns, or believe in fairy influences?'

My reply was that I believed superstition to a certain extent to be inherent in human nature. On which he smiled again, as he said:—'That old man you just noticed is a Welshman, by name William Williams, an entire believer in the fairies, or, as he calls them, "Tylwyth Têg," as well as in the spirits of the mines. He tells, moreover, the most marvellous stories of Owen Glendower's palace at Machylleth, and of his being crowned King of Wales, and of the venerable bard Tolo Eoch, and of the songs he sang.' To which he added, 'William Williams is the last of that sort of men, and I like to see him pass and repass.'

And I bethought me of a passage of Borrow's—who loved the conversation of trampers—in his 'Welsh Wales,' declaring they were nowadays the only people from whom you could learn anything.

'Do you believe in fairies?' said I.

'I do, sir; but they are very seldom seen, and when they are they do no harm to anybody. I only wish there were as few corpse-candles as there are Tylwyth Têg, and that they did as little harm.'

'They foreshow people's death, don't they?' said I.

'They do, sir; but that's not all the harm they do. They are very dangerous for anyone to meet with. If they once bump up against you when you are walking carelessly it is generally all over with you in this world.'

And as I gazed upon the venerable tree I repeated to myself the lines of Martial on Cæsar's Plane at Corduba :—

Sæpe sub hac madidi luserunt arbore Fauni,
Terruit et tacitam fistula sera domum :
Dumque fugit solos nocturnum Pana per agros ;
Sæpe sub hac latuit rustica fronde Dryas.

Epigr. lib. IX. lxii. 11, &c.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE REIGN OF GEORGE THE THIRD.

What is a Prince? What is a Governour,
Withouten fame of worschip and honour?
What is his mycht suppos he be a lorde,
If that his folk sall nocht to him accorde?
Lancelot of the Laik, Book II. 1523;
Early English Text Society: Rev. W. W. SKEAT.

Now gird thyself for other war;
Look round thee and behold what ills,
Remediable and yet unremedied,
Afflict man's wretched race!
Put on the panoply of Faith,
Bestir thyself against thine inward foes,
Ignorance and Want, with all their brood
Of miseries and crimes.
SOUTHEY, *Ode. Written during the War with America*, 1814.

Who late and early God doth pray
More of His grace than gifts to lend,
And entertain the nameless day
With a well chosen book or friend.

This man is freed from servile bands,
Of hopes to rise, or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing yet hath all.
SIR HENRY WOTTON.

THE year 1782 was ushered in gloomily with bad news from the West Indies, when St. Eustatia was retaken. Demirara and Essequibo wrested back, St. Kitts lost, and only Barbadoes and Antigua left, to say nothing of the capitulation of Minorca nearer home on February 5. So much was the King troubled also at the time—driven almost to distraction by the oligarchy of the great Whig houses—that it is said he seriously contemplated retiring to Hanover; which if he had

done, he would have fulfilled the wish of many during the reigns of George I. and George II., who, as we have seen before in these pages, were accustomed to express their dislike to anyone by the expression, '*Go to Hanover!*' In the valley of the Rea, said my Talking Friend, there was no commoner form of speech, and even yet it is not altogether extinct amongst the lower orders, who are the last to retain proverbs.

On February 22 General Conway moved an address to the King entreating his Majesty 'that the war on the continent of North America might no longer be pressed for the impracticable purpose of reducing the inhabitants of that country to obedience.' This was followed by a resolution on the 27th against any further attempts to reduce the insurgent colonies, and finally on March 4 a new address was framed 'to inform the sovereign that the House would consider as enemies to the King and country all those who should advise the further prosecution of offensive war in North America.' On the 20th of this month Lord North's administration ended. Whatever its course, he was a noble-hearted man and the truthful friend of his sovereign. Those who disliked him most politically were still constrained to confess that he was always good company, and always good-humoured. How much would the bitters of life be sweetened could we divest ourselves of party-feeling!

> And do as adversaries do in law—
> Strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends.

It was on April 12 that Rodney's great engagement took place with Comte de Grasse in the West Indies, and it was on this 'memorable day that he was the first, not indeed to invent or devise, but to put into practice the bold manœuvre known by the name of breaking the line.' News of the victory reached London in the middle of May – the 18th Walpole writes to Mann—to the great joy of the people and the Ministry; and the Admiral was created a Baron, with an additional pension by that very Ministry which had sent to recall him. Burke even, 'referring to his old Eustatia charge, said finely,' says Lord Mahon, 'that as there was a

bald spot on the head of Rodney he was willing to cover it with laurels.' In the letter to Mann above alluded to Walpole adds :—'Rodney was recalled by the new Admiralty, but recovers from his falls with marvellous agility. The late Ministers are thus robbed of a victory which ought to have been theirs ; but the mob do not look into the almanack.'

The 'Ville de Paris,' captured with the Comte de Grasse, Rodney's worthy foe, was a present to Louis XV. from the city of Paris, and is said to have cost no less than 176,000*l.* Unluckily the vessel which the Frenchman thought could not be captured foundered on her way home. It is reported that Rodney's little bantam cock was with him on deck on the famous April 12, and that he crowed with all his might and main and clapped his wings at every broadside the 'Formidable' poured into the 'Ville de Paris.' Rodney did not arrive in England till September 21. The Comte de Grasse preceded him, having landed at Portsmouth on August 5 ; the next great captive to Marshal Tallard, who fell into the hands of the Duke of Marlborough after the battle of Blenheim. On Rodney's arrival at the 'Bush Tavern,' Bristol, and having been sumptuously entertained with his retinue, he called next morning for his bill. 'Your lordship forgets that you paid it before hand on April 12' was the answer of the worthy landlord—so characteristic of an Englishman.

But as Rodney, like Benbow, was a great favourite with old Shrewsbury boys, and as his pillar was on the Breidden Hill, in Montgomeryshire, and might be constantly seen by them from the Welshpool Road, I may venture to jot down a few scattered notes about him in passing. Perhaps the reader may draw some conclusion for himself about the man, as Lucretius did from the little motes that danced in the sunbeams.

> Duntaxat rerum magnarum parva potest res
> Exemplare dare, et vestigia notitiai.

The 'Mirror,' I know not of what date, says that the Pillar had the inscriptions following :—'Summæ pereunt Columnæ, Georgii Brydges Rodney Baronetti viget nomen et vigebit.' ('Executed in honour of Sir George Brydges

Rodney, Admiral of the White, by a subscription of the gentlemen of the county'), and these lines in Welsh :—

Y Colofnau uchaf a syrthiant
A'r Tyrau cadarn af . . .
Ond Clod Syr Brydges Rodney
A gynnydda beunydd
A'i Enw da ef ni ddileir.

The above version of the inscription with the translation is from one of the best living Welsh scholars, forwarded to me this day, April 12, 1867, by the Rev. L. Darwall. He says :—'The last word in the second line has puzzled my friend (the greatest Welsh scholar of the day). I tried, however, one of my parishioners, a Welsh woman, but with no better success. She also said that there was no word answering to "towers." I suppose, therefore, that "Tyrau" is an English word in a Welsh form.'

TRANSLATION.

The highest columns will fall,
And the highest towers . . .,
But the fame of Sir Brydges Rodney
Will increase daily,
And his good name will not be destroyed.

My friend the Rev. C. Awdry, of Worthen, writes me word that the Rev. L. Darwall, the Curate of Criggion, says that the 'inscriptions on the pillar mentioned in the fragment of the "Mirror" do not now exist, nor had they ever existed during his residence at Criggion, a space of nearly thirty years.'

The Rev. W. E. Evans, brother of the late Archdeacon Evans, who preceded Mr. Darwall, recollects no vestige of an inscription. He adds :—'Lord Rodney married, I believe, a daughter of Alderman Harley, who was of the Oxford family, and possessed a considerable estate in Herefordshire. There seemed to have been some connection, whether by friendship or otherwise, with some families in Montgomeryshire, and when the pillar was finished there was a great meeting of Herefordshire and Montgomeryshire gentlemen on the Breidden, the Herefordshire gentlemen being hospitably entertained by their Montgomeryshire friends ; a large party,

among whom was my wife's grandfather, were staying with Sir Edward Lloyd at Bodsach, near Llanfyllin. Why the summit of the Breidden was fixed upon for the site of the pillar I never quite understood. The Stretton Hills prevent its being seen from Herefordshire.'

By birth he had no connection with the old county, as he saw the light at Walton-on-Thames, and was educated at Harrow; but, as my Talking Friend said, 'HEARTS OF OAK' were always acceptable in Shropshire, and such was Admiral Rodney, every inch of him. And I called to mind the epigram which some wag composed when the City of London presented their freedom to Admiral Keppel in a box of heart of oak and to Admiral Rodney in a gold box.

Each admiral's defective part,
Satiric citys, you've told;
The cautious Keppel wanted heart,
The gallant Rodney gold!

The fine old admiral became a great favourite not only in the country, but especially in London, where there are still five Rodney's Heads, though his birth dates back to 1718. At Rodney Pillar Inn at Criggion is the following Anacreontic effusion on a double-sided signboard:—

Under these trees in sunny weather
Just try a cup of ale, however;
And if in tempest or in storm
A couple then to make you warm;
But when the day is very cold
Then taste a mug a twelvemonth old.

On the reverse (how well I recollect visiting the quaint old inn):—

Rest and regale yourself, 'tis pleasant;
Enough is all the present need;
That's the due of the hardy peasant
Who toils all sorts of men to feed.
Then muzzle not the ox when he treads out the corn,
Nor grudge honest labour its pipe and its horn.

Rodney entered the navy early, and showed skill and courage from the first to the last, as may be seen from his life; but these details do not belong to these pages, as his

mention only comes in because the Breidden was visible from the topmost branches of my Talking Friend, and because when the pillar was first set up all passers and repassers would be talking of him, and would drink to his health at the Lea Cross and the Cock.

Very little appears to have been known of him in the valley of the Rea previous to his bombardment of Hâvre-de-Grâce, which continued for fifty-two hours, and did vast damage. This was in July 1759. He was next known hereabouts at the close of 1761, when he was sent as admiral to Martinico, the land forces being under the command of General Monkton, who had friends and connections in Shropshire and Staffordshire. It was on his return that he was raised to be a baronet for his services.

After this, for a long while, the Rector of Hanwood knew nothing about him, except that, brave as he was, he was in difficulties, and might have said :—

Viden', egestas quid negoti dat homini misero mali.

Many causes contributed to his poverty—so at least the world said—a large and increasing family, a love for play, but, beyond all, his ruinous election for Northampton in 1768. After this he was appointed to the Jamaica station, whence he returned to England in 1774 ; and then, within a little while, found it more convenient to live in Paris, where he remained till 1778, when the war broke out. It was whilst he was last in the West Indies that he realised their great value to this country, and said of the island of St. Lucia that as long as it remained in British hands she would retain the sovereignty of those waters. His views relative to the West Indies never altered.

It was on October 1, 1779, that, being relieved of debt by the noble generosity of Maréchal Biron, and so enabled to leave Paris, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief on the Leeward Isles and Barbadoes station, and on January 16, 1780, it must have been comforting to the old tar, who had been slighted and neglected, to write to his employer as our townsman, old Benbow, would have written :—'Great Britain is again mistress of the Straits,' as he did when he

vanquished Don Juan de Langara and relieved Gibraltar. It was with no small pride too that he wrote to his wife, saying:—'I have likewise relieved Minorca, and Great Britain this moment reigns sovereign of the Mediterranean as well as of the ocean.' After this the reader will readily understand how great was his disappointment, on his return to the West Indies, that, owing to want of help from his captains, the engagement with the Count de Guichen proved an indecisive one—certainly no victory.

On applying to my Talking Friend for local information he told me that the spring and summer of this year were most miserably wet, that the vale was constantly flooded, that much of the hay crop was lost, and the grain crops very indifferently housed. The result was much sickness all around, and a new sort of feverish cold, called influenza—by the French *la grippe*. Virgil's lines translated would have expressed what the Old Tree said:—

> Subito quum tabida membris,
> Corrupto cœli tractu, miserandaque venit
> Arboribusque satisque lues, et letifer annus.

The extracts following will show that the old chronicler was right.

On May 5 Walpole writes to Mann:—'Never was there such a spring. After deluges of rain, we have had an east wind that has half starved London, as a fleet of colliers cannot get in. Coals were sold yesterday at seven guineas a chaldron, nor is there an entire leaf yet on any tree.' Cold and rain continued throughout the month of June, on the 20th or 21st of which month he wrote to the Countess of Ossory, saying, 'His majesty the Sun, who had not shone a good while, came out in a very warm mood, and everybody was impatient to kiss his hand; but in three days his chancellor, the East Wind, turned those halcyon days to a storm, and I look upon the bloom of summer as gone.' In fact, there was little of the summer throughout England; and on August 31 he wrote once more to Mann, saying, 'We have had the most deplorable wet summer that ever I remember, after three hotter than any in my memory.'

It is in a letter to the same old friend at Florence that he

thus notices the access of influenza :—'Since the naval triumph in the West Indies I have had no public event to send you, nor anything else but journals of the epidemic disorder, which has been so universal, and so little fatal, that a dozen names would comprise all I know who have escaped it or died of it. The strangest part of it is that, though of very short duration, it has left a weakness or lassitude of which people found it very difficult to recover. One has had nothing to do but to send messages of inquiry after all one's acquaintances, and yet no servants to send on those messages. The theatres were shut up,' &c. When he says to the Countess of Ossory, under June 13, that 'hundreds of peach and apricot trees' have been struck with it, he only says what the Old Oak said, for the mortality amongst the fruit trees was incredible.

It must be noted here that Lord Rockingham, now suffering from water on the chest, was attacked with influenza, and died at one o'clock at noon on July 1. The access of it in 1767 has been alluded to before, and it was in June this year that Lady Rodney wrote to her husband :—'This disorder has been so severe, and so universal, that the public places have been obliged to be shut up.' 'Such was the malady we have felt so severely since.'

Of the Rockingham Administration little was known in the valley, but the Rector of Hanwood always maintained that, though not energetic, he was a very lovable man, and the beloved of all that came in his way. No man in public life, said the cynic Walpole, had fewer enemies. His administration was succeeded by that of Lord Shelburne's, in which William Pitt, at the age of twenty-three, became Chancellor of the Exchequer ; and a marvellous man he was, like his father before him, whether we agree with him or differ from him.

> Si quid amicum erga bene feci, aut consului fideliter,
> Non videor meruisse laudem ; culpa caruisse arbitror.

So, at least, would Dundas have said, when he rose in haste to defend his friend.

> Such a man
> Would be a copy to those younger times,
> Which, follow'd well, would demonstrate them now
> But go on backward :

words in which I would wish in no way to depreciate the great talents of Fox, whom Walpole thought 'the fittest man in England for Prime Minister,' and whose character by Lord Ossory must still be read with admiration.

On August 29 this year the whole nation received a shock by the sinking of the 'Royal George,' and my Talking Friend, pure heart of oak, shivered from root to topmost branch. 'Just this moment,' writes Walpole to the Countess of Ossory, on the 31st, 'I hear the shocking loss of the "Royal George." Admiral Kempenfelt is a loss indeed; but I confess I feel more for the hundreds of poor babes who have lost their parents.' (Vol. viii. 275.)

Having mentioned Lord Shelburne's name, it is fitting to say in this place that it was he who said in the House of Lords on July 10, 1782, 'that, although the sun of England would set with the loss of America, it was his resolution to improve the twilight, and to prepare for the rising of England's sun again.' He was not a man to despair of the fortunes of his country.

The siege of Gibraltar, which began in July 1779—though it continued in name till February 1783, when news of the peace arrived—may be said to have ended this year, when the vast floating batteries of the Chevalier d'Arcon were destroyed by the hot shot of the garrison. As Walpole writes to the Countess of Ossory, under October 1, 'I have this minute received a letter from General Conway, with these words: "I have a piece of good news to tell you, which is the complete and entire defeat of the long-meditated attack on Gibraltar, which began on the 13th at 3 P.M., and before midnight all the famous floating batteries were either burnt or sunk by red-hot balls. They lost, it is said, 1,500 men, but none of distinction named. They saved some in their own boats, and General Elliot some in those he sent out."'

Parliament, which was prorogued on July 11, met again on December 5, when the King made use of these memorable words in recognising the independence of American colonies: 'In thus admitting their separation from the Crown of their kingdoms, I have sacrificed every consideration of my own to

the wishes and opinion of my people. I make it my humble and earnest prayer to Almighty God that Great Britain may not feel the costs which might result from so great a dismemberment of the empire, and that America may be free from the calamities which have formerly proved to the mother country how essential monarchy is to the enjoyment of constitutional liberty. Religion, language, interest, affections may, and I hope will, yet prove a bond of permanent union between the two countries. To this end neither attention nor disposition on my part shall be wanting.' So spoke George III. in the sincerity of his heart.

As regards local matters, it was at the summer assize this year that Baron Hotham laid a fine of 2,000*l.* upon the county till they should build anew their shire-hall. It was used for the first time March 17, 1786. As was found out, to the cost of all, the foundations were ill laid, and the present century has seen it rebuilt.

Towards the end of January 1783 news came to the valley that preliminaries of peace had been signed at Versailles, and the news throughout the country was not altogether acceptable, and indeed this was a very general feeling at the time. There is a curious letter of Cowper's to Unwin on the reconciliation of the French and English Courts, quite a burlesque and a John Gilpin in its way. 'But monarchs, alas! crowned and sceptred as they are, are yet but men; they fall out, they are reconciled, just like the meanest of their subjects.' Though a man of peace, he did not like this peace.

Meanwhile, though the valley was quiet, there were great political dissensions, and the King had little rest. But—

> Things out of hope are compassed oft with venturing;

and, as Walpole wrote to Mann on February 18, 'Lord North and Mr. Fox united their forces and defeated Lord Shelburne in a pitched battle.' Fox, who had declared that if he made terms with any of the late Ministry 'he would rest satisfied to be called the most infamous of mankind,' joined hands with Lord North, whom he had been ready to impeach. 'An equivocator,' as the porter says in 'Macbeth,' 'that could sway

on both scales against either scale.' And hence originated the term 'coalition,' and the term 'coalition Ministry' remains in men's mouths till this day. On February 24 Lord Shelburne resigned, and George Selwyn might have said :—

> Time is like a fashionable host,
> That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand,
> And with his arms outstretch'd, as he would fly,
> Grasps the new comer. Welcome ever smiles,
> And Farewell goes out sighing.

It was George Selwyn who, about this time, had called Fox and Pitt 'the idle and the industrious apprentices.'

It was not till April 2 that the new Ministers kissed hands, so long was the Interministerium, *sede vacante*, and, as Walpole added, 'Do not imagine that we feel any inconvenience from the administration wanting a head. Everything goes on more quietly for that defect. The Parliament sits, business is done without obstruction, but nobody can be opposed when there is nobody to be opposed ; the inference, I doubt, is that a Minister is opposed, not for what he *does*, but for what he *is*. In the fable of Æsop the Head and Members were starved out when they would not feed the Belly ; but we now find that the Belly and *Members* are well crammed, they can jog on mighty comfortably without the Head.' As is well known, the Duke of Portland, a mere cipher, was the nominal head of the coalition Ministry—'a fit block,' the wags of the day said, 'to hang *whigs* on.' But so it is often and often, and

> The ass that carried Isis on his back
> Thought that the superstitious people kneel'd
> To give his dulness humble reverence.

Early in May the death of the Prince Octavius was known in the valley. He was born February 20, 1779, and died on May 3. My Talking Friend said it was a cold spring with a wet June. In July summer came in earnest, and it was a very sultry time. The result was a fine harvest early gathered in. On August 1 Walpole wrote to the Earl of Strafford :—'The harvest is half over already around us ; and so pure that not a poppy or cornflower is to be seen' ; and

on the 4th to the Countess of Ossory: 'I begin to think that the Rumbolds & Co. have robbed the Indies of their climate, as well as of their gold and diamonds, and brought it home in ingots.' Nevertheless, it was a fine and productive season; for, as it is well known, animals thrive well on short commons if they have dry jackets.

Previous to the first heavy fall of autumnal rain, my Talking Friend informed me that a wonderful meteor was seen in the valley—the same, no doubt, as mentioned by our historians under August 23. The 'Shrewsbury Chronicle' contains an extraordinary account of an immense globe of fire which appeared in the atmosphere about nine o'clock at night, seeming in magnitude about twenty times larger (?) than the apparent face of the moon, with a tail like a comet, and moving with great velocity from S.W. to N.E., and apparently about 100 yards above the tops of the houses—an optical delusion, of course, however large the meteor might have been. Horace Walpole mentions some such sight in writing to the Countess of Ossory on the 27th: 'I don't know how I missed seeing the meteor and its young ones, for I was sitting over against the window.' Again to Mann, under the same date: 'We have had pigmy earthquakes, much havoc by lightning, and some very respectable meteors.' Evidently the atmosphere was much disturbed.

It was upon this occasion that the Old Oak, Time's faithful chronicler, told me the following bit of local history and superstition.

An old man lived at Hanwood in those days who came there many years ago, and no one knew from where, called Michael Gennow, who was very superstitious, and at times (no doubt when his bodily health was out of sorts) saw all sorts of visions, and heard all sorts of unearthly sounds. He always knew—Owen Glendower knew not better—when the 'Harriers of the Air' were coursing the skies, and foretold most ominous results, speaking most mysteriously of the Aurora Borealis, or the 'merry dancers,' which showed so grandly about the time of the earthquake in Sicily and Calabria. In truth, the old man in Wordsworth's sonnet seems to have been much like to him:—

He the seven birds hath seen that never part,
Seen the SEVEN WHISTLERS in their nightly rounds,
And counted them; and oftentimes will start,
For overhead are sweeping GABRIEL'S HOUNDS,
Doomed, with their impious lord, the flying hart
To chase for ever, on aerial grounds!

Naturally, under such 'sovereignty of eye and ear,' the venerable worthy had much to tell, and he would hold, what the Americans call a 'caucus' beneath my Talking Friend's shade on the Rea-side, and, being most decidedly meteor-stricken, he foreboded much evil from this fiery carpet hung out athwart the autumnal skies. But his views were but what Menenius in 'Coriolanus' calls 'bisson conspectuities,' and we in our wisdom should dub him but a very simple old man; 'for did he not,' said my Talking Friend, 'on seeing a magpie repeat this doggerel?'—

One is sorrow, two are mirth,
Three a wedding, four a birth,
Five heaven, six hell,
Seven the De'il's ain sell.

'And have I not often heard him mutter to himself the saw of the little children, which continues yet where the shallows babble sweetly?'—

The robin and the wren
Are God Almighty's cock and hen;
Him that harrieth their nest,
Never shall his soul have rest.
The martin and the swallow
Are God Almighty's bow and arrow.

A very simple man indeed must have been old Michael Gennow, and possibly Sir Isaac Newton would have enjoyed his society when he cut two holes in the door—a large one for the cat and a small one for the kitten! And there was a rustling throughout the Old Oak's boughs as he said:—

'Poor Michael Gennow! We have no simplicity left now! Some even are so wise as to rob little children of their nursery rhymes!' Be sure, reader, that I understood his quiet underwit, and was

Pleased with that social sweet garrulity,
The poor disbanded veteran's sole delight.

And as I looked upon his grand old head, covered with the thickest leaves of the year, and the midsummer shoot so well ripened, which added so much to the foliage, I bethought me of some words of Jerome which I had been reading in one of his letters to Eustochium—'*Studium est haec vita mortalibus : hic contendimus, ut alibi coronemur*'—a happy turn of thought for any at any time, specially for one who has passed his climacteric :—

> What time the white sail of the soul is rounding
> The Misty Cape—the Promontory of Death !

It was upon this same occasion that he told me a curious and astonishing anecdote, on observing an elderly gentleman riding up the road in a spenser—then commonly used—on his way towards Montgomery, where, as a wholesale grocer, he had great dealings for those days.

'That man,' said he, 'homely as he looks, has a character for uprightness and unpretending charity beyond his fellows. He is well-to-do, but not rich ; has made three fortunes, as the world calls fortunes, and has lost them by what the same world would call inconsiderate kindness. His last great loss was through banking bills for a London correspondent, who, on the christening of his eldest daughter had pinned a 100*l.* note on her chrysom.' I know not how, but as my father told me, he fell into trouble, so corroborating the Old Oak's story.

'In those days,' continued my Talking Friend, 'there lived an old hatter in Shrewsbury, a man of means, though quiet and unobtrusive, and never thought to be so rich as he was. His friend's trouble came to his knowledge, and at once he went, early in the morning, to the old shop on Mardol Head, and asked for him much earlier than was his wont' (I can see the little back room now in which the interview took place, for I knew it well) ; 'and on the good worthy man's appearance in his morning costume, the old hatter said curtly, "I am surprised you allowed others to tell me of your present difficulty. All I have is at your disposal, for though I have plenty of relatives I have no family. Take these bills at once and clear all. What's that, Sam, between me and thee !" And

so he departed gruffly and kindly; but a friend indeed became a friend in need. In a few years,' continued my Talking Friend, 'all was right again, and that grand old man supplied half the shops in Montgomeryshire.' And he added, 'There's no good having friends if they are never to be any good to us!'

I can just recollect the old hatter. A little, thin, squat man—a lover of his pipe and the social glass. His friend Sam was kindness itself to me as a boy, and 'tis gratitude that tells the story. I do not imagine that Shakspeare wrote 'Timon of Athens,' but the sentiment is right. What need have we of friends if we should never have need of them? They were the most needless creatures living should we ne'er have use for them. It would most resemble sweet instruments hung up in caves that keep their sounds to themselves; and the good old hatter had no idea of such music.

It was not till September 3 that the three definitive treaties of peace with America, France, and Spain were signed—the first at Paris, the others at Versailles—'that anniversary,' remarks Lord Mahon, 'so memorable in the Life of Cromwell,' referring to a note in the fourth canto of Lord Byron's 'Childe Harold.' 'On September 3 Cromwell gained the victory of Dunbar; a year afterwards he obtained his "crowning mercy" of Worcester, and a few years after, on the same day, which he had ever esteemed the most fortunate for him, died.'

Of the peace with France and Spain many held very different opinions, but most English hearts rejoiced to be at one with America:—

> The land
> Where Washington hath left
> His awful memory,
> A light for after times.

Meanwhile the names of Pitt and Fox were talked of from Caux Castle to Coleham, and the valley took its part in politics on the dissolution of Parliament, which took place on March 25; and on May 18 Sir Charlton Leighton, Bart., and William Pultenay, Esq., were returned as burgesses for Shrewsbury. It was at this election that those who lost their seats were called 'Fox's Martyrs,' a

very familiar name to the inhabitants of Hanwood, Meole, and Pontesbury, owing to their old connection with Richard Baxter, Bart. What amused the people most, not only here but elsewhere, was the theft of the Great Seal. Bluff Thurlow was sound asleep at the time, like as I have seen his namesake the Owl, in days gone by, within the Keep of Arundel Castle, regardless of the visitors that thronged him. And sure enough, even in his sleep, that old owl of the Castle did look most sapient. Walpole's account of the theft to Mann is characteristic.

'The Dissolution of Parliament, a manœuvre so long upon the anvil, and so often intermitted, has at last taken place. The King went to the House on Wednesday, and in a few words declared his intention. A strange event interrupted the show for the moment. In the preceding night some thieves had broken into the Chancellor's house and stolen the Great Seal. The hubbub it occasioned for some hours was prodigious, but as forms and ceremonies are not quite so hard and fast as before Time was arrived at years of discretion, a cast was taken off, and served for the death of the House of Commons last night. In truth there does not appear to remain any terror in solemnity when housebreakers make free with the head of the law so easily.' Likely enough old Thurlow growled out an awful laugh when he did awake to the loss, and the fumes of the last bottle of port passed off. Philostratus somewhere tells of a picture of Apollo accusing Mercury of stealing his oxen, whilst Mercury at the same time steals his quiver. Reft of it, Apollo would have laughed a very different laugh to that when—

> Te, boves olim nisi reddidisses
> Per dolum amotas, puerum minaci
> Voce dum terret, viduus pharetra
> Risit Apollo.

The summer of this year was a very ungenial one, and my Talking Friend said that his midsummer shoots did not thrive at all. The correspondence of the day attests his veracity. Walpole, in his last recorded letter to the Countess of Aylesbury, writes:—'The month of June, according to

custom immemorial, is as cold as Christmas. I had a fire last night, and all my rosebuds, I believe, would have been very glad to sit by it.' This was June 19, and on the 25th he writes to Conway:—'I am now waiting for dry weather to cut my hay; though Nature certainly never intended hay should be cut dry, as it always rains all June'; adding on the 30th, 'I found a great fire at Mrs. Clive's this evening, and Mr. Raftor hanging over it like a smoked ham;' and then that it was dear work to have nothing but 'a water souchet of hay.' On August 8 he wrote to Mann:—'We have had, and it still continues, a most dismal summer; not only wet, but so cold that for these two evenings I have had a fire.' No wonder, therefore, that Cowper should write to Unwin about the 'uncommon rigour' of the season, adding that 'it is so cold on the 27th August that I shake in the greenhouse when I am writing.'

The harvest, as might be expected, was but ill gathered in—indeed, throughout the valley of the Rea, and round about Montgomery and Bishop's Castle, it was a very indifferent one altogether. And old Michael Gennow said: 'Who could expect it otherwise, when the cocks kept crowing all day long at uncertain hours?' Such superstitions still linger on, and will do so. As some old rhymester said:—

> If a babbling fowl we call a jay,
> A squirrel, or a hare, but cross the way,
> Their mirth is spoiled, because they hold it true,
> That some mischance must thereupon ensue.

Plenty of superstition remains amongst us yet; still we are ready to say:—

> What custom wills in all things should we do 't,
> The dust on antique time would be unswept;
> And mountainous error be too highly heap'd
> For truth to over-peer.

Old John Warter of Meole was in London in the September of this year, the same who witnessed the Gordon Riots, and on his return brought a wonderful account of a balloon which he had seen on the 15th of that month. It was the celebrated Vincent Lunardi's, whom Walpole writes

of as the 'first *airyonaut* that has mounted into the clouds in this country.' He took with him a dog, a cat, and a pigeon, and descended in a meadow near Ware, in Hertfordshire. Writing again to Mann on December 2, Walpole says:—'Lunardi, the Neapolitan secretary, is said to have bought three or four thousand pounds in the Stocks by exhibiting his person, his balloon, and his dog and cat at the Pantheon for a shilling each visitor. Blanchard, a Frenchman, is his rival, and I expect they will soon have an air-fight in the clouds, like a stork and a kite.'

The name of Dr. JOHNSON has been mentioned before as a familiar one in the valley, and at the old homestead of Meole. Born at Lichfield, September 18, 1709, he died in London, December 13 this year. The literary world at least owed much to him, and, though they would not be tolerated now, his knock-down arguments met well the scepticism of the day. It is because he was so valued here that the few scattered notes which follow are thrown together; and what old Shrewsbury boy does not recollect dear old Bishop Butler's reading to us his 'LONDON' as we were reading our Latin of Juvenal, of which it is so splendid an imitation?—refused at first by all the booksellers, like Churchill's 'Rosciad' and bought at last by Mr. Robert Dodsley for ten guineas. Hence Derrick's lines:—

> Will no kind patron Johnson own?
> Shall Johnson friendless range the town,
> And every publisher refuse
> The offspring of his happy muse?

It was on February 18 this year that Mrs. Thrale wrote to Miss Burney, saying:—'Every week's existence is gain to him, who, like good Hezekiah, wearies heaven with entreaties for life.' And so it was, and only a few days before his death Miss Burney herself writes to a friend:—'He has been more deeply depressed than ever. Fearing death as he does, no one can wonder. Why he should fear it, all may wonder.' For, as Burke said to her father, at his last interview with him, 'His work is almost done, and well has he done it.' And I bethought me of the Psalmist's words:

'*Nevertheless, though I am sometime afraid, yet put I my trust in Thee.*'

And so, no doubt, was it with this righteous servant who considered and loved God's poor, and before his translation hence was so blessed that all his fears were absorbed in the merits and propitiation of his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And one might apply the lines :—

> Things done well
> And with a care, exempt themselves from fear ;
> Things done without example, in their issue
> Are to be feared.

A grand and comforting sight to his friend Mr. Strahan was the strong man bowed and bending at the foot of the Cross ! 'For some time before his death,' wrote Dr. Brocklesby to Boswell, 'all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith, and his trust in the merits and propitiation of Jesus Christ. He talked often to me about the necessity of faith in the *sacrifice* of Jesus, as necessary beyond all good works whatever for the salvation of mankind.'

The remarks of Cowper upon the childishness of parts of his Diary, not very judiciously published, must be admitted to have their weight, but one forgets them when one reads his epitaph upon him :—

> Here Johnson lies—a sage, by all allow'd,
> Whom to have bred may well make England proud ;
> Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,
> The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought ;
> Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine, and strong,
> Superior praise to the mere poet's song ;
> How many a noble gift from heav'n possessed
> And Faith at last alone worth all the rest.
> O man, immortal by a double prize,
> By fame on earth, by glory in the skies !

Methinks that after all that has been written of him, as the stern, uncompromising moralist, none than Samuel Johnson would more willingly have subscribed to the words of Hooker, in his undying sermon :—

'Christ hath merited Righteousness for as many as are found in Him. In Him God findeth us, if we be faithful ; for

by faith we are incorporated into Him. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man which in himself is impious—full of iniquity, full of sin—him, being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin in hatred through repentance—him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putting away his sin by not imputing it; taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto, by pardoning it; and accepteth him in Jesus Christ, as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled all that is commanded him in the law; shall I say more perfectly righteous than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the Apostle saith, "*God made him which knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor. v. 21). Such we are in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God Himself. Let it be counted folly, or frenzy, or whatsoever, it is our comfort, and our wisdom; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made Himself the sin of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God.'

But lest I should hear some one whispering, as Hamlet said to Horatio, 'Something too much of this,' I conclude, &c., &c.

One day we had been speaking of some depredations which had been committed on the side of Ponsert Hill, where some squatters had thus early begun to collect (it is a great colony now), when my Talking Friend said that 'a handcuffed felon has just been led by,' and that 'the poor wretch trembled like an aspen-tree'; and he added, 'I once heard a Welshman say that the Cross was made of aspen-wood, and that the tree had had a perpetual ague fit when in leaf ever since; but no doubt it is but a wild superstition among the hills.'

Whether the Welsh have this superstition now I cannot say, but it is believed that the Bretons have; and I bethought me of some lines I had read in Mr. Henderson's 'Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders,' translated, if I recollect, from the German:—

> Once, as our Saviour walked with men below,
> His path of mercy through a forest lay;
> And, mark! how all the drooping branches show
> What homage best a silent tree may pay!

Only the aspen stands erect and free,
Scorning to join that voiceless worship pure ;
But see ! He casts one look upon the tree,
Struck to the heart, she trembles evermore !

I recollect in my younger days to have heard the aspen in North Wales called '*tafod y merch*,' that is, woman's tongue.

The only other bit of local information appertaining to this year which I collected from my Talking Friend was the removal of the ancient signs in Shrewsbury, which, as in other towns, projected over the streets. London 'in the Chepe,' as is well known, was full of them ; and in the original 'Life of Dr. Thomas Fuller' is the passage following, illustrative of his marvellous memory :—

'He undertook once, in passing to and fro from Temple Bar to the furthest conduit in Cheapside, at his return again to tell every sign as they stood in order on both sides of the way, repeating them either backward or forward, as they should choose, which he exactly did, not missing or misplacing one, to the admiration of those that heard him.'

The end of the year was very cold, and the commencement of 1785, and, indeed, the whole spring, was a trying time. Walpole writes to Mann on March 5 : 'From the beginning of December we have had such a succession of vicissitudes of all kinds of bad weather such as I never remember—repeated snows, severe frosts, fogs, sudden rains, and assassinating winds have made everybody ill, or kept them so. All my hope is from the Almanac, which tells me that spring is at hand ; yet the month of March, like the fast on the vigil of a saint's festival, is very apt to prepare one by rigour for rejoicing.' Even as late as April 8 he says : 'The east wind lasts, so that in every respect it looks like the beginning of winter ; and one so long neither Oglethorpe nor I remember.'

My Talking Friend said that all his early shoots were burnt off by the frost. Cold at this season often performs the effect of heat, and it will

work as strong
As aconitum, or rash gunpowder.

In the spring or the beginning of summer this year there was a great talk about America and the new Minister, Mr. John Adams. It appears that he landed at Lowestoft the latter end of May, and on June 1 attended the King's *levée* at St. James's. Being led by Lord Carmarthen, as Secretary of State, into the King's chamber, he said:—'I think myself more fortunate than all my fellow-citizens in having the distinguished honour to be the first to stand in your Majesty's royal presence in a diplomatic character; and I shall esteem myself the happiest of men if I can be instrumental in recommending my country more and more to your Majesty's royal benevolence.' 'Sir,' said George III. in answer, 'I wish you to believe, and that it may be understood in America, that I have done nothing in the late contest but what I thought myself indispensably bound to do by the duty which I owed to my people. I will be very frank with you. I was the last to consent to the separation; but the separation having been made, and having become inevitable, I have always said, as I say now, that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent Power.' Mr. Adams said:—'The King, indeed, was much affected, and I confess I was not less so.'

The great Italian poet says:—

> Perchè quando un gran periglio è presso,
> Difficil molto è consigliar se stesso.

And so was it with this single-minded monarch, and

> The pumice that defaceth memory

will not erase his good intents from the records of the nation. Upright in principle, he was often mistaken, and many of his mistakes may be attributed to his imperfect education. It is doubtful if even he, the third of his race, could quite read the English character, especially as regarded what Shakspeare called 'the mutable, rank-scented many'; and to the very last, unconstrained to the contrary, he would have replied to Lord North, or Pitt,

> I say again,
> In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate
> The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition,
> Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sown, and scatter'd.

No doubt the great statesman's move on the Reform in Parliament was by no means acceptable to his Majesty, and it was a subject much mooted at the Club in Shrewsbury, called Sir Uvedale Corbett's, for the maintenance of Whig principles in the county.

It was about this time, my Talking Friend informed me, that the people in the valley began to talk under his shade of the education of their children, which, although urged by Richard Baxter long before, had been seriously neglected. Few read well, and fewer still could write. Most young servants lived in their masters' houses, and then, when the mistress was herself sufficiently educated, they learnt what they could under her superintending care, especially on the Sunday evenings. But more than this was needed, and the question of teaching again at the church, which had been the custom of the Saxons before the Normans passed and repassed, between Caux Castle and Shrewsbury, began once more to occupy men's minds.

No doubt the question was beginning to be a common one. The extract following, from one of Cowper's letters to the Rev. John Newton, certainly corroborates my Talking Friend's reminiscences. It is dated September 24:—'Mr. Scott called upon us yesterday: he is much inclined to set up a Sunday school, if he can raise a fund for the purpose. Mr. Jones has had one for some time at Clifton, and Mr. Unwin writes me word that he has been thinking of nothing else day and night for a fortnight. It is a wholesome measure, that seems to bid fair to be pretty generally adopted, and, for the good effects that it promises, deserves well to be so. I know not, indeed, while the spread of the Gospel continues so limited as it is, how a reformation of manners in the lower class of mankind can be brought to pass, or by what other means the utter abolition of all principle among them, moral as well as religious, can possibly be prevented. Heathenish parents can only bring up heathenish children; an assertion nowhere oftener or more clearly illustrated than at Olney, where children seven years of age infest the streets every evening with carols and with songs to which it would be unseemly to give their proper epithet. Such urchins as these

could not be so diabolically accomplished unless by the connivance of their parents. It is well, indeed, if in some instances their parents be not their instructors. Judging by their proficiency, one can hardly suppose any other. It is therefore, doubtless, an act of the greatest charity to snatch them out of such hands before the inveteracy of the evil shall have made them desperate.' So wrote the tender Cowper.

My Talking Friend said it was one of the coldest autumns he ever knew. Walpole wrote to Mann on October 30, 'We have had snow twice. Till last year I never knew snow in October since I can remember, which is no short time.' As usual on the Rea, the wild-ducks dropped there, and the bittern was heard booming in the old bog at Sibberscott.

I may end off this year with the following *locus classicus* from another of Walpole's letters to his old friend Mann, but of earlier date—February 4. 'I went out yesterday to take the air, but it fatigued me. Last night it snowed again, and I have stayed at home; but I shall recover; my appetite is perfect, and my sleep is marvellous. I don't know why I am not as sleek as a dormouse. Pray give me as good an account of yourself. Have you driven yet in your coach to the Cascine at the foot of Fiesole? or about the streets to the Duomo and Annunziata, as I used to do in the heat of the day for the mere pleasure of looking at the buildings, when everybody else was gone into bed? What a thousand years ago that was! Yet I recollect it as if but yesterday. I sometimes think I have lived two or three lives. My thirteen months at Florence was a pleasant youth to me of them. Seven months and a half at Paris, with four or five journeys thither since, was a middle age, quite different from five-and-twenty years in Parliament which had preceded—and an age since. Besides, as I was an infant when my father became Minister, I came into the world at five years old; knew half the remaining courts of King William and Queen Anne, or heard them talked of afresh; being the youngest and the favourite child, was carried to almost the first operas, kissed the hand of George the First, and am now hearing the frolics of his great great grandson' [that is, of the then Prince of

Wales, afterwards George IV.] 'Now all this cannot have happened in one life! I have seen a mistress of James II., the Duke of Marlborough's burial, three or four wars, the whole career, victories, and death of Lord Chatham, the loss of America, the second conflagration of London by Lord George Gordon—and yet I am not so old as Methusalem by four or five centuries! In short, I can sit and amuse myself with my own memory, and yet find new stores at every audience that I give to it. Then, for private episodes, vanities of characters, political intrigues, literary anecdotes, &c., the profusion that I remember is endless. In short, when I reflect on all that I have seen, heard, read, written; the many idle hours that I have passed; the nights I have wasted playing at bar; the weeks, nay months, I have spent in pain, you will not wonder that I almost think I have, like Pythagoras, been Panthoides Euphorbus, and have retained one memory in at least two bodies. Adieu!' A memorable paper this, and only to be equalled by another to the same old friend, April 8, to whom he says, 'You must not talk of age to me, who am as much broken as if I was an hundred. General Oglethorpe, who sometimes visits me, and who is 95, has the activity of youth when compared with me. His eyes, ears, articulation, limbs, and memory would suit a boy, if a boy could recollect a century backwards. His teeth are gone; he is a shadow, and a wrinkled one; but his spirits and his spirit are in full flame; two years and a half ago he challenged a neighbouring gentleman for trespassing on his manor. I could carry a cannon as easily as let off a pistol. There is, indeed, a circumstance which would, methinks, apply to an antediluvian: I have literally seen *seven* descents in one family. I do not believe Oglethorpe can boast of recollecting a longer genealogy.'

Some day or another these will be considered remarkable passages.

The year 1786 came in with cold and storm, and the whole of the spring was unsteady. Horace Walpole, whose gout made him what my Talking Friend would have called '*ncsh*,' i.e. very sensitive of cold, still dwells upon the subject of the weather. He writes to Mann on March 16, 'Our

second winter has been bitter—yesterday we had a new codicil of snow. Our great roads, spacious and level as they are, are almost impassable.' Again on April 30, 'We have no more spring than we had last year. I believe the milkmaids to-morrow will be forced to dress their garlands with Christmas nosegays of holly and ivy, for want of flowers.' And on May 4 he adds that we have had no spring or summer yet. 'I believe both seasons have perceived that nobody goes out of town till July, and that therefore it is not worth while to come over so early as they used to do.'

It was in this year that all people were talking of Warren Hastings, who had landed at Plymouth from India in June 1785. At the beginning of the present June, Burke brought forward his charge relating to the Rohilla war, which was, in fact, the thin end of the wedge, intended to rive the oak. And although it could not be said of the eloquence of Burke that

> when he speaks,
> The air, a charter'd libertine, is still,
> And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears,
> To steal his sweet and honeyed sentences,

yet was his speech a mighty lever, and for long he had the ear of the House.

And the name of Warren Hastings is particularly mentioned here because the matter was well known in the valley of the Rea; for Colonel Wood (his MS. of the Rohilla war is now before me) came back from India to give evidence on his trial (though I do not think he was called upon), and took up his residence at Hanwood. It was on June 22 that Horace Walpole (whose dislike of Hastings was intense) wrote to Mann, 'The great culprit Hastings' fate is not decided; but to his and mankind's surprise, the House of Commons last week voted him on one of the articles deserving to be impeached, and Mr. Pitt declared on that article against him; so Burke has proved to have been in the right in his prosecution.' And this was the opinion of many likewise, out of doors, however much they may have altered their views afterwards.

But what concerns the remarkable impeachment and trial

of so remarkable a man must be said in the history of the times. Nine years altogether did it last, ending in Warren Hastings' acquittal. And then he retired from public life and lived at his beloved Daylesford—the inheritance of his fathers, which he had retrieved—till August 22, 1818, when, 'in the eighty-sixth year of his age, he met death with the same tranquil and decorous fortitude which he had opposed to all the trials of his various and eventful life.' So wrote Lord Macaulay, and those who shall read his summing up of his character will have reason to think it a just one. As he said of him standing at the bar, 'He looked like a great man, and not like a bad man.' It is painful to think of such a man standing at the bar! His was not

> such a pleasure as encaged birds
> Conceive, when, after many moody thoughts,
> At last, by notes of household harmony,
> They quite forget their loss of liberty!

For nine long years he felt all that a man in his position could feel, and was only released, by acquittal, in the tenth! It was like what Æschylus tells of the Grecian host in the Agamemnon—

> Εὖτ' ἀπλοίᾳ κεναγγεῖ βαρύ-
> νοντ' Ἀχαϊκὸς λεὼς, κ.τ.λ.

My Talking Friend called to my recollection how often Jonathan Scott used to be at Colonel Wood's at Hanwood, and I recollect perfectly being at his house with the Colonel, my grandfather by the mother's side. It was close to the Quarry, on the side where the old Cedar of Lebanon stands—wickedly cut the last time I was in Shrewsbury. People now, and but few, only recollect him as the translator of 'Bahar-Danush,' or Guides of Knowledge; but he was a well-known man in his day—Warren Hastings' Persian secretary, and translator of Ferishtah's History of Deccan, and of the reigns of the later Emperors of Hindoostan. I may add that my lamented friend the late Mrs. Wooll, widow of Dr. Wooll, some time Master of Rugby, was at this celebrated trial, saw Fanny Burney there, and corroborated to me her statements. Nothing can be more clear and graphic than her sketches from day to day as recorded in her Diary.

As is well known, on August 2 this year an attempt was made on the King's life by Margaret, or Peg, Nicholson, a poor crazy woman, who gave name to what have since been called Peg Nicholson's Rights. The account of the King's coolness and consideration for her state may be seen vividly put by Madame D'Arblay:—'The poor creature is mad! Don't hurt her! She has not hurt me!' I recollect a person who still received a pension in remainder—a descendant of the person who stayed her hand—a very strange woman, who lived at Salvington, the learned Selden's birthplace, in the parish of West Tarring, Sussex.

It was on January 1, 1787, that the King showed his love for agriculture by addressing to the well-known Arthur Young the first of certain letters, under the name of Ralph Robinson, in which he pointed out the errors in the then existing system, so earning for himself the name of 'FARMER GEORGE.' His farm at Windsor, and in Richmond New Park, and Keel's farm in the parish of Mortlake are sufficiently well known, as well as the amusement he took in them. This, after a while, resulted in the formation of the General Board of Agriculture; and my Talking Friend said that a visible improvement took place in the valley of the Rea from this time.

The good man had not read in vain the Book of books he loved so well, but minded, no doubt, the words in Ecclesiastes: '*The profit of the earth is for all; the king himself is served by the field.*' Nor would it escape his notice how Uzziah in his best days '*Built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry.*'

All the early part of the year was more or less chilly. Even as late as June 14 Walpole writes to the Countess of Ossory (though, by the bye, he had to report a pleasant change on the 15th): 'We are relapsed into our east-windhood, which has reigned ever since I have been here'—that is, at Strawberry Hill—'for this *green-winter*, which, I presume, is the highest title due to this season, which in southern climes is positive *summer*, a name imported by our travellers, with grapes, peaches, and tuberoses; but, as we cannot build hothouses

for our whole latitude, our summers seldom come to maturity. However, most of my senses have enjoyed themselves—my sight with verdure, my smell by millions of honeysuckles, my hearing by nightingales, and my feeling with good fires: a tolerable luxury for an old cavalier in the north of Europe. One must not call his residence at this favoured spot a refined selfishness,

> Or like delight that doth itself devour;

for it was always open to his friends, and his patience with stranger visitors was great. Hannah More always puts forth the best parts of his character.

On inquiring of my Talking Friend what local matters he could recollect, he told me that the new gaol was begun at Shrewsbury this year—the result, as I very well called to mind, of the philanthropic Howard's representations; and well did George III. gauge his benevolent character when he said, 'Howard wants no statue; his virtues will live when every statue has crumbled into dust.' How one loves the very name of Howard! The countryman as he passes by still looks upon the Pelican and her Young—

> For in such business
> Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant
> More learned than their ears.

'Late in the year,' my time-honoured chronicler added, 'if my old memory serves me, there was a great display of Northern Lights, which have been from time immemorial considered ominous by country people.' He was quite right as to their appearance, as Madame D'Arblay records how the Prince of Wales, 'in an immense wrapping great-coat, buttoned up round his chin, so that he was almost tied between cape and hat,' about one o'clock on November 8, frightened them all by 'a sudden rap-tap at the dressing-room door.' The Queen laughed, 'as he told her eagerly he merely came to inform her that there were the most beautiful Northern Lights to be seen that could possibly be imagined, and begged her to come to the gallery windows.'

The early part of 1788 was very ungenial, and was much felt in the valley of the Rea, where the mist arising from the

stream, succeeded by continued white frosts, checked vegetation, and was succeeded by honey-dew blights. As late as March 19 Cowper writes from Weston-Underwood, Bucks, to the Rev. Walter Bagot, that the spring is no spring of the poets, but one of extreme severity—'sunless skies and freezing blasts, surpassing all that we experienced in the depth of winter.'

After this there came a very dry time, but as cold as ever. Under June 17 Cowper writes again to the same friend of the east-wind breathing on his roses and inflaming his eyes; and he adds, 'In France and Italy flowers blow because it is warm, but here in spite of the cold.' Horace Walpole writes under the very same date to the Earl of Strafford:—'The streets are as green as the fields: we are burnt to the bone, and have not a lock of hay to cover our nakedness; oats are so dear that I suppose they will soon be eaten at Brooks' and fashionable tables as a rarity.' My Talking Friend well remembered this season, and said that the meadow-lands, even by the brook-side, were all but dried up; adding, however, that the year was not an unfruitful one.

It was late in June that the rains came, and then the rapid growth of the grass was like magic. Two passages from the above-quoted great letter-writers—characteristic of the men—may be given here. 'It has pleased God,' writes Cowper to Samuel Rose, Esq., 'to give us rain, without which this part of our country at least must soon have become a desert. The meadows have been parched to a January brown, and we have foddered our cattle for some time as in winter. The goodness and power of God are never (I believe) so universally acknowledged as at the end of a long drought. Man is naturally a self-sufficient animal, and in all concerns that seem to lie within the sphere of his own ability, thinks little or not at-all of the need he always has of protection and furtherance from Above. But he is sensible that the clouds will not assemble at his bidding, and that though the clouds assemble they will not fall in showers because he commands them. When, therefore, at last the blessing descends, you shall hear even in the streets the most irreligious and thoughtless with one voice exclaim, "Thank God!" confessing

themselves indebted to His favour, and willing, at least so far as words go, to give Him the glory. I can hardly doubt, therefore, that the earth is sometimes parched and the crops endangered in order that the multitude may not want a memento to whom they owe them, nor absolutely forget the Power on which all depend for all things.' So wrote the tender-hearted, pious Cowper.

It was early in July this year, my Talking Friend told me, that the whole of Hanwood and Meole and the adjoining parts of the valley were thrown into a wild ferment of surprise, for a messenger had arrived at the rectory at Hanwood stating that old St. Chad's in Shrewsbury had fallen. For a thousand years this grand old church, notwithstanding many changes, had withstood all the shocks of time, and but for mistaken economy might yet have been standing as a whole instead of as a fragment.

Early in the summer the north-west pillar of the tower had shown dangerous cracks in it, and many of the congregation ceased to attend. The churchwardens then became alarmed, and sought the advice of a then rising architect—Mr. Telford—at that time patronised by William Pultenay, Esq., one of the members. Better authority could not have been, and he reported, say our historians of the town, 'that in consequence of graves having been heedlessly made adjoining the foot of the north-western pillar beneath the tower, that main support of the steeple had shrunk, and that the whole north side of the nave was in a most dangerous state, which was greatly augmented by the nearly total decay of the chief timbers of the roof; insomuch that the weight was almost entirely supported by the lateral pressure of the walls, in themselves extremely defective; and that the least additional outward spread might bring down the ponderous roof with scarcely a moment's warning. He recommended, therefore, the immediate taking down of the tower, that the shattered pier might be rebuilt, that the decayed timbers of the roof should be renewed, and the north-west wall of the nave secured.' Such was the advice of Telford, the afterwards celebrated civil engineer, whom I knew in his later days and visited with Mr. Rickman, his biographer, who tells us in a

racy note how the Parish Vestry exclaimed against the architect's proposals as too expensive, and imputed, if report be true, interested motives to Mr. Pultenay's *protégé*; upon which Mr. Telford left them, saying 'that if they wished to discuss anything besides the alarming state of the church they had better adjourn to some safer place where there was no danger of its falling on their heads.' The late Mr. William Harley, of Shrewsbury, the kind friend of my boyhood, told me this same anecdote; and he added that Telford spoke in his driest Scotch manner, and quitted the church, as a Scotchman would say, incontinently. For years after he became celebrated Telford retained a lodging at Shrewsbury, where he kept his mallet and tools and leather jerkins, saying archly, 'He never knew the day he might want them.'

Well had it been had his advice been taken, but it was not. On the contrary, 'the suggestion of a stone-mason was fatally listened to, who proposed to cut away the lower parts of the infirm pier, and to underbuild it with freestone, without removing or even lessening the vast incumbent weight of the tower and bells. This infatuated advice was unanimously approved. The attempt was made, and on the second evening after the workmen had commenced their operations, the sexton, on entering the belfry to ring the knell previous to a funeral, perceived the floor covered with particles of mortar. On his attempting to raise the great bell the tower shook, a shower of stones descended, and a cloud of dust arose. Trembling and in haste, he descended into the church and carried off the service books, and as much of the furniture as his alarm would allow him to collect. During the same evening a gentleman, while walking in his garden in the college, observed the cross and dome of the tower to be agitated by a constantly tremulous motion. On the following morning, July 9, 1788, just as the chime struck 4, the decayed pier gave way, the tower was instantly rent asunder, and the north side of it, with most of the east and west sides, falling on the roofs of the nave and transept, all that part of the venerable fabric was precipitated with a tremendous crash,' which, though it alarmed few of the inhabitants, was heard as far as the Old Heath.

As before stated, timely care would have saved this noble fabric, but it is with the people sometimes and churchwardens as Skelton says it was with the bishops of his day, who ran to their own houses,

> Howbeit they let down fall
> Their churches cathedral.

The whole town was alive to their merciful escape, and the 'Thursday in the following week was observed as a day of solemn thanksgiving, not by the parishioners only, but by the inhabitants of the town at large. The pious sentiment was much increased by a sensible and affectionate pastoral letter which the vicar printed and distributed among his parishioners. The shops were shut, all business was suspended, and a crowded and devout congregation attended him to St. Mary's Church, where he delivered an impressive and highly appropriate discourse,' well remembered by many in my youth.

The vicar here mentioned was the Rev. Thomas Stedman, appointed this very year to the vicarage of St. Chad's; and besides this sad welcome, he had much spiritual indifference to contend with—

> But when the greater malady is fix'd,
> The lesser is scarce felt.

A most earnest and conscientious man was Thomas Stedman, belonging to what has since been *mis*called the Evangelical School, and one whom I remember well as a child when at Mr. Case's school, which looked into the new churchyard. Job Orton had recommended him to Dr. Stonehouse, rector of Great and Little Cheveril, Wilts, where he numbered in his congregation the 'Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.' In 1775, Bishop Warburton presented him to the living of Wormington, Gloucester, and he witnessed that well-known prelate's declining powers. He died December 5, 1825, in the eightieth year of his age, universally beloved and respected, having outlived some hard words thrown against him for going to hear John Wesley in the Wesleyan meeting-house when he was last in Shrewsbury. He was not one to say, in opposition to the works of that holy and reverend man, notwithstanding the schism that ensued here as elsewhere—

> We are oft to blame in this,—
> 'Tis too much proved,—that, with devotion's visage
> And pious action, we do sugar o'er
> The devil himself.

Might St. Chad's have been rebuilt? or was the same mistake committed as afterwards with St. Alkmund's? No doubt in these days the ancient fabric would have been restored, and we should have had the fine collegiate church again in the place of the present most unsightly building, more like a theatre than the House of God! It was unfortunate that Mr. James Wyatt, who was applied to, could not give his attention to the plans; even more unfortunate still that the plans of Mr. George Stewart, who had built Attingham and Lythwood, were adopted, at a cost of 19,352*l.*

However, the church was rebuilt, and that too in troublous times, for even already a storm was gathering in France, and

> with other incident throes
> That nature's fragile vessel doth sustain
> In life's uncertain voyage,

we had to feel its coming effects on this side the Channel.

It was on March 2, 1790, being St. Chad's Day, that the first stone was laid, and so ready were the people to build, irrespective of many hindrances and heartburnings, that the new church was completed in two years and a half, and consecrated August 20, 1792.

The whole valley, said my Talking Friend, went to the opening of it, and the 'last of the old Squires,' brother John, often officiated there, some of whose sermons, 'preached at St. Chad's,' are now before me.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE FRENCH WAR.

Whom, we know well,
The world's large spaces cannot parallel.
Troil. and Cress. act ii. sc. ii.

King. Where is the crown? who took it from my pillow?
War. When we withdrew, my liege, we left it here.
King. The prince hath ta'en it hence:—go, seek him out.
Is he so hasty that he doth suppose
My sleep my death?
2 *Henry IV.* act. iv. sc. iv.

On April 15, 1770, George III. writes to Lord Weymouth, 'I do not choose to talk on business immediately on coming from the chapel on Sacrament days.'—*Jesse*, vol. i. 510.

It could not be said of him as Cowper wrote to Newton in October, 1783, 'It is ever the way of those who rule the earth to leave out of their reckoning Him who rules the universe.'—*Works*, vol. iv. 315; ed. SOUTHEY.

My thoughts are whirled like a potter's wheel:
I know not where I am, nor what I do.
1 *Hen. VI.* act. i. sc. ii.

IT was towards the end of the year 1788 that mixed reports reached the valley of the Rea about the King's ill state of health, as it was first called, and then of the 'grievous malady' that had overtaken him, and the people said he had had overmuch on his mind, and had had too much to do; and it began to be whispered that, notwithstanding all the goodness and the tenderness of the Queen, the royal home had been made uncomfortable by disobedient children. Of the Prince of Wales they spoke in no very measured terms; but they wondered to hear that the Duke of York, so entirely beloved by his tender-hearted father, should have crossed his wishes and followed after evil courses, and cut him to the quick.

The visit to Cheltenham has been referred to before,

and on August 16 the Court returned to Windsor, where, it appears, the King's health appeared to be much as usual. But in October there was a change for the worse; his natural excitement increased, and at the levée on the 24th of that month no doubt remained about his state; and it was in the royal closet when the levée was over that he said to the Chancellor: 'You too, then, my Lord Thurlow, forsake me, and suppose me ill beyond recovery; but, whatever you and Mr. Pitt may think and feel, *I, that am born a gentleman*, shall never lay my head on my last pillow in peace and quiet *so long as I remember the loss of the American Colonies.*' Such was the state of his mind.

It is remarkable, considering his intimacy at that time with Pitt, that it was not till November 11 that Wilberforce first heard of the King's illness at Lichfield. The feeling of the people for their monarch was intense, and his medical advisers were threatened if they did not save his life. Contrasted with such sentiments, what was the heartless conduct of the libertine prince? No reader of Madame D'Arblay's Diary and Letters but knows and grieves over all this. Still more remarkable is it, because it is often otherwise, that under the fiercest accesses of the King's delirium the purity of his character and the goodness of his honest, upright heart were never eclipsed. William Pitt never showed himself to greater advantage than in protecting his royal master's interests; all low tampering was by his open heart

Shunn'd like the courtship of a crocodile.

Nor was this forgotten by many in his contest with Fox on the Regency question, which now necessarily arose. It was on December 3 that Walpole wrote to the Countess of Ossory saying that 'things now draw to a crisis,' and adds, 'Every *eighty-eight* seems to be a favourite period with Fate.' It is a very enigmatical letter. '*Interregnum*, he thought, 'seldom produced halcyon days,' and he abided by his 'steady opinion of our being exceedingly fortunate in the present embarrassed situation of France.' He might have added in his caustic vein, 'There have been many great

men that have flattered the people, who ne'er loved them; and there be many they have loved, they knew not wherefore.'

Meanwhile, whilst the King was suffering, and the nation distressed, the Prince of Wales was at the head of Bacchanalian orgies at Brighthelmstone. It was in this very year that the prize-fight took place there in which one of the pugilists was killed by the other, and the Prince was obliged to be hurried off the ground. This was told me by my lamented friend the Rev. Peter Wood, late Rector of Broadwater, who happened to be at Brighton, or, as he always called it, Brighthelmstone, at the time. He died many years ago, full of years and goodness.

Writing to Hannah More on September 22, Horace Walpole says that this month, 'like all our old ladies, has given itself May airs'; and he had just written to the Earl of Strafford, saying, 'Thank God! we are not only at peace, but in full plenty—nay, and in full beauty too. Still better: though we have had rivers of rain, it has not, contrary to all precedent, washed away our warm weather. September, a month I generally dislike for its irresolute mixture of warm and cold, has hitherto been peremptorily fine. The apple and the walnut trees bend down with fruit, as in a poetic description of Paradise.

My Talking Friend recollected well that the Spanish chestnut ripened its fruit, and that the rooks carried off walnuts by the score—indeed there are few things which this clever bird likes better, and at such a time he requires to be closely looked after, being as destructive as hornets among peaches and nectarines. 'As for wapses,' said an old gardener, 'we doesn't care so much about them; but those hornets, they carts the fruit off.'

The beginning of 1789 was bitterly cold, and the wild-ducks, as usual, dropped down in the open freshets of the Rea. In London, the Thames was frozen over below the bridge, and there were booths on it; but the severity of the frost gave way early, and, as we shall see by-and-by, it was a wet summer.

Meanwhile, as throughout the whole kingdom, so too in the valley of the Rea, the King's health was the constant

subject, not only of general conversation but of the deepest anxiety, and it might have been said almost in the words of Davenant's 'Gondibert'—

> Who knows that power can never be too high,
> When by the good possest! for 'tis in them
> The swelling Nile, from which though people fly
> They prosper most by rising of the stream.

At the end of the preceding year there was an evident improvement under the care of Dr. Willis of Lincoln; indeed, as Madame D'Arblay informs us, on December 11 the King took his first walk in Kew Garden. It was not, however, till February 16, 1789, that he took his first walk with the Queen in Richmond Garden, a day or two after Walpole had written to the second Sir Horace Mann what I think the most unfeeling of all his many letters. What a contrast is that letter to the words of Cowper, addressed to Lady Hesketh on the 15th: 'We are delighted with your account of the King, and with the symptoms which now show themselves of his speedy recovery. May a few more weeks confirm our hopes, and place him on his throne again, to the everlasting mortification of the dogs who now grin and go about the city, grudging that they are not satisfied!'

It was in January that Hannah More wrote to her sister: 'Does not Pitt fight like a hero for the poor Queen? But who will fight for *him*, for he has not a hundred a year in the world? Like an honest old house-steward going to be turned off, he is anxious to put everything in order, and have the house in such a condition that the next servant may do as little mischief as possible.' She little suspected that on February 23 the King would have written his well-known letter to Pitt, in which the single-hearted monarch said that 'his constant attachment to my interest, and that of the public, which are inseparable, must ever place him in the most advantageous light.' What a pleasure to write, what a pleasure to receive, such a letter!

The humour of John Gilpin comes out in another letter of Cowper's, written on February 25: 'We who are loyal subjects, and love our monarch, may now take up the old

Jacobite ditty, and say, *The King shall enjoy his own again*; an application which, I fear, we should never have had an opportunity to make had his recovery been delayed a little longer. The faction at home have driven too fast, and the Irish will find that they have made a blunder. Now let us listen to the raptures that will be pretended on this occasion. Sheridan, I expect, will soar in rhetorical ecstasies; Burke will say his prayers are answered; and Fox will term it the happiest court that he has ever witnessed; and while they thus speak they will gnash their teeth and curse inwardly. Oh, they are a blessed junto! May opposition to Ministry be their business while they live!'

It is well known how much the King was attached to Bishop Hurd, and him he summoned to Kew, to receive, or, as it was then said, to *take* the Sacrament at his hands. He administered it to him on March 15 at Windsor, in the chapel of the castle, and again on Easter Sunday, April 12, and preached both days. It will be recollected that the King would not look at the Regency Papers till after he had received the Sacrament, so that his mind might be in a proper state to forgive. Kind-hearted monarch! who during his illness often shed tears over Lord North's blindness, so forgiving him at his saddest time of need. Good man! that said so unaffectedly to the Bishop of London that 'his trust in God had never forsaken him at the worst, and that *that* confidence alone had been his support.'

On March 1 the Thanksgiving Prayer was read in all the churches of London for the King's recovery, and on the Sunday following all Meole and Hanwood thronged the little church by the brook-side, thankfully to hear it there, and to lift up their hearts with their voices in the sanctuary. How comfortable and comforting is it to see lowly worshippers, and to join with them in their quiet humble orisons! Ovid's were not ill words:—

> Est aliquid spectare deos, et adesse putare,
> Et quasi cum vero numine posse loqui.

Such was the joy on the present occasion that it was no

wonder William Grenville should write: 'Nobody talks, writes, thinks, or dreams of anything else.'

On March 10 there was a general illumination, to which the Queen and the Princesses went, having prepared a private one for the King at Kew, leaving him almost alone with his pet Amelia, who presented to him Fanny Burney's lines, to which she had added :—

The little bearer begs a kiss
From dear papa for bringing this.

Happy little princess! Thrice happy King George III., who sat up for the Queen till after one o'clock, and received her bare-headed! Cowper, who always wrote so tenderly, might well write on this occasion :—

Glad she came that night to prove,
A witness undenied,
How much the object of HER love
Was loved by ALL beside!

True enough was it what was inscribed on the fan given by the Queen to Miss Burney, 'Health restored to me, and happiness to millions!' The day of general thanksgiving followed on April 23, and then it was, as the King heard the voices of five thousand children lifted up (the delight of Handel), that he said to the Bishop of Lincoln, 'I now feel that I have been ill!' But he was well supported, and bore up bravely.

My Talking Friend impressed upon me that the summer of the present year was one of the wettest he had ever known, and that all the meadow hay was sopped with wet. On July 1 Walpole wrote to the Countess of Ossory and told her that his had been sopping twelve days, and adds: 'I am determined never to cut my grass again till October, the only month whose honour you can trust. June always ruins one in hay and coals. I crouch every evening over the fire.' And only the next day he tells Hannah More that at the reformation of the calendar June ought 'to have been intercalated between December and January.' The weather, indeed, tolerated all winter diversions. In another letter, to Miss Berry, on July 31, he tells an anecdote of Quin, who,

being once asked if he had ever seen so bad a winter, replied, 'Yes, just such an one last summer.' After all, however, the harvest was not a bad one, and the 'appointed weeks' intervened; but so late as September 5 Walpole wrote to Conway: 'Except a parenthesis of scarce all August, there has been no temptation to walk abroad. It rained incessantly in June and July, and now again we have torrents every day.'

Meanwhile, none but one who was as deaf as the *Bécassine sourde* (the little Jack Snipe of the Sibberscott boys), or at least some dullard born, as the Italians say, '*in tiempo del sirocco*,' that stupefying south-east blast, but must have been awakened by the combustion in France. Even Walpole, the greatest stickler for liberty, was scared by its licence, and thought it, as he wrote to the Misses Berry, 'momentous indeed.'

On the night of July 15 he penned these remarkable words to his friend Conway: 'Here seems the egg to be hatched, and imagination runs away with the idea. I may fancy I shall hear of the King and Queen leaving Versailles, like Charles the First, and then shift imagination six-and-forty years lower, and figure their fugitive Majesties taking refuge in this country,' &c. On the 16th he says to the Countess of Ossory: 'I look upon the present revolution in that country as a temporary paroxysm that will not last, and I grieve for the calamities which such violent transitions will inflict; but I will not pretend to foretell, having nothing of the prophet but ignorance without the inspiration.'

'You have heard tell,' said my Talking Friend to me very suddenly, and all his leaves quivered and rustled to the breeze—'you have heard tell more than once of old James Cross, who kept the "Cock" at Hanwood for many years, and was parish clerk at intervals. Poor old James! he never could abide the French or a Frenchman. One day—it was during the dark times which occurred in France, within three or four years after this date—a poor French *émigré* stopped at his door. Possibly, for there were many such, the man was an impostor, but old James Cross did not take him to be such, and told him plainly that although no man

in want ever passed his door without a slice of bread and a drop of beer, he nevertheless did not like his nation. Clearly, the poor man was in want, and on his way to Ludlow, where, at that time, many Frenchmen congregated; and he burst into tears, and poor old James said, "I never was so ashamed of myself in my life." The fact is, he had nearly committed a breach of Christian hospitality through his prejudices, and had he done so he would not have gone down to his grave in peace, for he was a Christian man, with all his eccentricities.'

The year 1789 was not an eventful one in the valley—indeed, the chief topic of conversation was the French Revolution, at this time a sort of human Stromboli, always in eruption, never at rest. Horace Walpole quotes a saying of Voltaire's from one of his letters to La Chalotais, which perhaps, looking to the Revolution now blazing so fiercely, was more applicable to his own writings: '*Vous avez jetté des germes qui produiront un jour plus qu'on ne pense.*' Certainly he had sown dragons' teeth.

His letters at this time show how he was dismayed at the liberty which had run into licence. 'For my part,' he writes to the Misses Berry, July 3, 'I am so shocked at French barbarity that I begin to think our hatred of them is not national prejudice but natural instinct—as tame animals are born with an antipathy to beasts of prey.' And to the Countess of Ossory, August 30: 'What a nation are the French! Sometimes carrying slavery to the idolatry of their tyrants; sometimes gorging their native insolence with all the extravagance of cruelty.' And thus his ideas of liberty were lower, and he wrote to Sir David Dalrymple, 'The new legislators were pedants, not politicians, when they announced the equality of all men.'

A letter of Hannah More's to her sister, early in the year, contains the following illustrative anecdote: 'Things are getting worse and worse in France. A lady of quality the other day, in Paris, rung her bell and desired the footman to send up her maid Jeannotte. In vain she rang and rang; the man told her Jeannotte refused to come, or be any longer under anybody. At last Jeannotte walked into the room

with a pamphlet open in her hand, and sat down. The lady, astonished, asked her what she meant. "*C'est que je lis*," said Jeannotte, without taking her eyes off the book. The lady insisted on an explanation of this impertinence. The maid replied with great sangfroid, "*Madame, c'est que nous allons tous devenir égaux, et je me prépare pour l'égalité.*" No wonder that she added, 'I have conceived an utter aversion to liberty according to the present idea of it in France.'

As for the valley of the Rea, improvements in agriculture were quietly going on, and a good deal of planting; but my Talking Friend said he had no faith in the black and Lombardy poplars; they might be ornamental in spots, but they never could be useful. Worthy old Oak! he did not like outlandish trees, and was not so pliant as Horace Walpole when speaking of the altered fashions of the day: 'It is entirely out of fashion for women to grow old and stay at home in the evening. They invite you, indeed, now and then, but do not expect to see you till midnight, which is rather too late to begin the day, unless one was born but twenty years ago. I do not condemn any fashions, which the young ought to set, but the old certainly ought not; but an oak that has been going on its old way for an hundred years cannot shoot into a Maypole in three years because it is the mode to plant Lombardy poplars.'

And I repeated the words beneath the shade of my venerable friend, and all his leaves shook as with laughter, and he said, himself much pleased, 'Your time-honoured Friend, my father, would have said the like.'

And I called to mind what Robert Stephenson said of his father: 'My father flashed his bull's-eye full upon a subject, and brought it out in its most vivid light on an instant; his strong common-sense and his varied experience, operating upon a thoughtful mind, were his most powerful illuminatory.' The Old Oak's *memory* was a marvel, and if he said of the old Shelton Oak, or the Cross Oak at Cound,

> By the holy aposttelles xii
> I love you better than my selve,

it was no mere form of speech, for well he loved the fra-

ternity of the Oaks, and would still report how many were boundaries in the land, separating county from county, parish from parish, property from property.

It has been said that 'the mutes in the palace heard more confidences and told more secrets than all the old women of Rome put together.' This could not have been said of the Old Oak, for he was discreet in his speech, but there is no doubt it might have been said that he knew more than most oaks now standing. And even if he were sometimes silent and majestically thoughtful, with his gnarled trunk and wrinkled bark, it was all from excess of knowledge and long experience, and knowledge of time, and place, and years!

There is no such thing as silence,
Sleepless echoes round us wait,
Every sound we can interpret
Makes it bear on every state;
Absent voices crowd about us,
Talking with us by the way;
Faces that the grave has covered
Look upon us all the day!

The beginning of 1791 was rough and cold—indeed, up to the end of February, H. Walpole writes, 'We have every variety of bad weather, with a momentary leaf-gold of sun.' After this came a pleasant term, and he wrote to the Misses Berry on April 15, saying, 'England never saw such a spring-time since it was fifteen years old. The warmth, blossom, and verdure are unparalleled.'

This was followed by a cold May, on the second of which month Cowper writes to the Rev. Walter Bagot: 'This is the fourth day we have had of almost incessant rain'; and on the 18th to Lady Hesketh, 'We have blooming scenes under wintry skies, and with icy blasts to fan them.' Such was the earlier part of the year, and throughout there was a great variety of climate, for on writing to the Misses Berry on June 14 Walpole says, 'It froze hard last night: I went out for a moment to look at my haymakers, and was starved. The contents of an English June are hay and ice, orange-flowers and rheumatism'; adding on June 23: 'In my last, the description of June, for *orange-flowers* pray read *roses*;

the east winds have starved all the former, but the latter, having been settled here before the wars of York and Lancaster, are naturalised to the climate, and reck not whether June arrives in summer or winter. They blow by their own old-style almanacs.' Quite Walpolian this!

What is above said as regards the year generally is borne out by later letters on September 11 and 13: 'We have got a codicil to summer, that is as delightful as, I believe, the seasons in the Fortunate Islands.' 'Indeed, we have had nine or ten days of such warmth and serenity (here called *heat*) as I scarce remember when the year begins to have grey, or rather yellow, hairs. All windows have been flung up again and fans ventilated, and it is true that hay-carts have been transporting hay-cocks, from a second crop, all the morning from Sir Francis Basset's island opposite to my windows. The setting sun and the long autumnal shade enriched the landscape to a Claude Lorrain.'

On the whole it was a favourable year, and the valley prospered.

Meanwhile what was going on in France scared the whole nation, and the Rectors of Hanwood and Pontesbury augured the worst. One of the worthy Rectors of Pontesbury entertained great notions of liberty, but, like H. Walpole, he saw how soon it ran into licence. Some very remarkable paragraphs in his letters are to be found on this head, as, for instance, under Feb. 26, to the Misses Berry: 'As it is true that extremes meet, the moment Despotism was hurled from the throne, it devolved to the Mob, whose Majesties, not being able to write their names, do not sign *lettres de cachet*, but execute their wills with their own hands.' Again, speaking of 'the topsy-turvyhood which characterises the present age,' he asks, 'If French kings have been tyrants, what are French people?' 'Nothing appears to me to promise their chaos duration; consequently, I expect more chaos, the sediment of which is commonly despotism.' 'Louis Onze could not have laid deeper foundations for despotism than those levellers who have rendered the name of liberty odious.'

It is curious to find the tender Cowper and the cynic Walpole expressing themselves in terms so similar on the

unhappy fortunes of the King and Queen of France. 'You judge right,' says the former to Lady Hesketh, 'in supposing that I pity the King and the Queen of France. I can truly say that, except the late melancholy circumstances of our own (when our sovereign had lost his senses, and his wife was almost worried out of hers), no royal distresses have ever moved me so much. And still I pity them, prisoners as they are now for life, and since their late unsuccessful attempts likely to be treated more scurvily than ever. Heaven help them! for in their case all other help seems vain.' Walpole's words, if possible, are even stronger: 'The escape of the King and Queen of France came merely time enough to double the shock of their being retaken. An ocean of pity cannot suffice to lament their miserable condition. One cannot think without horror of what the King and Queen must have felt, from the moment of their being stopped till their re-entry into their prison, if they are suffered to arrive there; perhaps to see the last of one another and of their children! They may have to feel, too, for the faithful assistants of their flight; all who did assist will certainly suffer, and many others too, for all the real liberty given to France is that anybody may hang anybody.'

The Rector of Hanwood was a great reader of Shakspeare, and he was heard to say by one not many years departed from us—

> Let it work,
> For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
> Hoist with his own petard.

'Twas but a while ago that I was reading Dr. Parry's exhaustive volume on Daniel, and there I met with those most true words of a faithful man, applicable especially to this sad, sad time which the Rector of Hanwood outlived, but with a mournful reminiscence.

At this time some interest was taken in the vale on the abolition of the slave trade, and the honoured names of Clarkson and Wilberforce began to be mentioned. With the latter—a Yorkshire family—the old Warters of Warter, in the county of York, had intermarried two centuries ago, when they bore the less soft name of Wilberfoss, and it was a

satisfaction to the old homestead to find the friend of Pitt abetting the cause of mercy. Well are the two advocates of Abolition coupled together in the Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo, under the 'Hopes of Man':—

> Anon, methought that in a spacious square,
> Of some great town the goodly ornament,
> Three statues I beheld, of sculpture fair;
> These, said the Muse, are they whom one consent
> Shall there deem worthy of the purest fame,
> Knowest those who best such gratitude may claim?
>
> Clarkson, I answer'd, first; whom to have seen
> And known in social hours may be my pride,
> Such friendship being praise; and one, I ween,
> Is Wilberforce, placed rightly at his side,
> Whose eloquent voice in that great cause was heard
> So oft and well. But who shall be the third?
>
> Time, said my teacher, will reveal the name
> Of him, who with these worthies shall enjoy
> The equal honour of enduring fame;
> He who the root of evil shall destroy,
> And from our laws shall blot the accursed word
> Of slave, shall rightly stand with them preferr'd.

But to return to the year before us. It was on February 24 that the good and venerable John Wesley wrote to Wilberforce urging him to persevere in his labours, and on the very next day he sank into that lethargy from which he never rallied. The work of this saint of the Lord was done, and on March 2 he fell on sleep in Jesus.

It was on February 1 that he wrote his last letter to America, in which he said, 'Those that desire to write or say anything to me have no time to lose, *for Time has shaken me by the hand, and Death is not far behind*'—words which his father had used in one of the last letters that he addressed to his sons in Oxford. On the 17th of that month he took a cold after preaching at Lambeth. For some days he struggled against increasing fever, and continued to preach till the Wednesday following, when he delivered his last sermon. From that time he became daily weaker and more lethargic, and on March 2 he died in peace, being in the 89th year of his age and the 65th of his ministry.

But though the time of Wesley's release was come, the time for the abolition of the slave was not, and on April 23 Walpole wrote to the Misses Berry, saying: 'The Abolition of the Slave Trade has been rejected by the House of Commons, though Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox united earnestly to carry it; but Commerce chinked its purse, and that sound is generally prevalent with the majority; and Humanity's tears and Eloquence's figures and arguments had no more effect than on those patrons of liberty the National Assembly of France, who, while they proclaimed the rights of men, did not choose to admit the sable moiety of mankind to a participation of those benefits.' Walpole was their earnest advocate.

Having mentioned the death of John Wesley, it may be noted here that Lady Huntingdon died this year. On June 23 Walpole writes to Miss Berry: 'The patriarchess of the Methodists, Lady Huntingdon, is dead. Now she and Whitefield are gone, the sect will probably decline: a second crop of apostles seldom acquire the influence of the founders.' Whitefield died at Newbury Port, in New England, Sept. 30, 1770.

Great satisfaction was felt throughout the valley of the Rea on the King's continued good health throughout the year. In September he went again to Weymouth, and was again welcomed as 'Farmer George'; and on October 1 the court returned to London on account of the marriage of the Duke of York with Frederica Charlotte Ulrica Catherine, eldest daughter of the King of Prussia. The marriage was solemnised at Berlin on September 29, and again in London on November 23.

It was in this year, but I know not at what time of it, that one of the Crosses made a periodical journey to London, and when he came back he said that he had seen a wonderful flood in the Thames, and Westminster Hall drowned out. And certainly there was.

So mild was the early part of the winter of 1792 that Cowper heard a nightingale on New Year's Day; but he writes on March 11 (the day after Lord Bute's death, of whom Lord Chatham had said in the House there was 'one behind the throne greater than the throne'), 'The winter is now

making himself amends, and seems the more peevish for having been encroached on at so undue a season. Nothing less than a large slice out of the spring will satisfy him.' What pleasant letters are Cowper's!

> It is the sweetest note that man may sing,
> When Grace in Virtue's key tunes Nature's string.

All this time things were going on very bad in France, and on May 29 H. Walpole writes to the Countess of Ossory: 'I know not a word of politics, madam, except seeing with horror that the "cowardly cannibals," as their own La Fayette calls his countrymen, and he is no democrat, are driving on the murder of their King and Queen.' Again on June 27: 'What barbarity in the monsters of Paris not at once to massacre the King and Queen, who have suffered a thousand deaths for three years together, trembling for themselves, for their children, and for each other.' Evidently, the murder of the King and Queen, which he still saw looming bloodily in the offing, disturbed and haunted his spirit sadly—for Walpole knew France and the French character well—their 'brutal insolence, bloody ferocity, savage barbarity, and malicious injustice' when flushed with the excitement of the Revolution. 'They have blasted and branded liberty—perhaps for centuries—and for that and their barbarity I abhor them; and for destroying their country—who can foresee for how long?' wrote he to his old correspondent, September 4, adding on the 10th: 'The French have stabbed liberty for centuries, and made despotism itself preferable to such tyrannic anarchy.' So dreadful was the time!

About this time the name of Hannah More became known at Hanwood through some excellent ladies — the Misses Hughes, who lived close to the church, and had Bristol connections. It was in this year she published, without her name, but with the intent to neutralise the poison of the French Revolution, the dialogue of 'Village Politics, by Will Chip,' and it sold by tens of thousands. The good ladies above mentioned, and their friend, the Rev. Edward Harries, distributed numerous copies throughout the valley of the Rea.

On August 5 this year died Lord North, also well known in the valley. No common man was the Earl of Guildford, even though charged with

> Cool remissness, Virtue's quartan fever.

It was on the debate on the second reading of the Alien Bill, December 28 this year, that Burke exhibited the dagger in the House of Commons, and threw it on the ground in his wrath and indignation.

It was late on in this year that Horace Walpole, looking on the horrors of the French Revolution, and the sad abuse of his favourite 'Liberty,' wrote thus to the Countess of Ossory: 'Subside at last the jarring elements of anarchy must;' adding, 'I have taken it into my head that some totally new religion will start up. The crimes and distresses of mankind will fit them for receiving some new impression, if violent and novel enough; and when they have had all morality and justice eradicated out of their hearts, and shall find that promised liberty and equality have made them but more uncomfortable than they were, with the additional load of guilt on their consciences, they will listen to any new-fashioned plan of repentance, and still more readily to any new-built paradise that will compensate for the destruction of all that was desirable on the present earth.' A striking passage; and the reader may see an equally striking prediction in Southey's 'Progress and Prospects of Society,' which has these many years been fulfilled in the Salt Lake City and the Mormonites. On reading them both Milton's words will naturally flash across the mind; so true it is that

> old experience doth attain
> To something like prophetic strain.

My Talking Friend informed me that the summer and autumn of 1792 were very wet, and that there were constant floods in the valley of the Rea. Great fears, indeed, were at one time entertained for the harvest, but happily the 'appointed weeks' were reserved.

On June 27 H. Walpole writes to the Countess of Ossory that the wet and cold weather had retarded his recovery, and

he calls the month 'that eternal weeper the month of June,' and then adds, 'As I love to find out consolations, I have discovered that nature, as a compensation, has given us verdure and coal-mines in lieu of summer; and as I can afford to keep a good fire, and have a beautiful view from my window, why should I complain?' On October 4, in a letter to the Earl of Harcourt, he speaks of a 'four months' deluge' of rain; and on the 8th he again writes to the Countess of Ossory, saying: 'You are in the right, madam, not to wade into your forest. Though the rain is abated the sun has not dried his rays, for he has not appeared even in his usual October.' But after this 'eternal rain,' as he calls it, he writes to her again from Strawberry Hill, November 29: 'I am still here, and very well. The weather, which your Ladyship dislikes, has been so mild here, after the worst of all summers, that whole November has appeared to me delightful.'

Meanwhile the Reign of Terror was proceeding in France, and worse news came day by day. It was on December 7 that Walpole again wrote to his old correspondent, and said: 'The French, by antecedent as well as by present proofs, have never been fit to be *unchained at once*, so innate is their savage barbarity.' But not only was the chain loosed in France, but the opinions of the Jacobins were spreading far and wide in our own country. It was on November 27 that Madame D'Arblay wrote from Aylsham in Norfolk: 'I am truly annoyed and half alarmed to find this country filled with little revolution societies, which transmit their notions of things to the larger committee at Norwich, which communicates the whole to the reformists in London. I am told there is scarce a village in Norfolk free from these meetings.' It is well known that Tom Paine societies were held there in favour of the 'Rights of Man.'

But all this is to be had without revolution, as was clearly seen by any who, like Cowper, loved their king and the prosperity of old England. And yet he could write thoughtfully, looking on to such reforms as serve a Constitution: 'All nations have a right to choose their own mode of government, and the sovereignty of the people is a doctrine that evinces itself for whenever the people choose to be masters

they always are so, and none can hinder them. God grant that we may have no revolution here, but unless we have a reform we certainly shall. Depend upon it, my dear, the hour is come when power founded in patronage and corrupt majorities must govern this land no longer. Concessions, too, must be made to dissenters of every denomination. They have a right to them—a right to all the privileges of Englishmen, and sooner or later, by fair means or by force, they will have them.' And his words have come to pass.

On inquiring of my Talking Friend of local circumstances, he told me that early in January this year the whole valley was surprised one night by an extraordinary light in the heavens, and on rushing out from their houses they saw a great ball of fire moving swiftly athwart the sky, and that nothing was talked of but this for a long time afterwards. All thought it portentous—most augured war and bloodshed.

All Montgomeryshire saw the meteor, and it was reported by the Welshmen to have exploded 'about ten miles from Machynlleth, appearing, in its descent, like a pyramid many miles in height from the earth upwards; in a very short time it disappeared, scattering by degrees like small sparks from the top downwards.'

It was in January this year that George Holland became Rector of Hanwood, but it was little he could tell the people of the meteor. Old Isaac the wheelwright said 'he supposed it to be a tame sort of comet that had come to see what was a-going on, and that it had lost its balance, and so dropped fire;' and his faithful companion, the aged cordwainer Hammond, told the people at the 'Cock' on Saturday night that 'old Isaac knew more things than he chose to tell.'

After all, those who prognosticated war were nearest the mark—for the barbarous murder of Louis XVI. was perpetrated on January 21, and on February 11 the King announced to Parliament the declaration of war. He thus wrote to Pitt on February 2: 'My natural sentiments are so strong for peace, that no event of less moment than the present could have made me decidedly of opinion that duty, as well as

interest, calls on us to join against that most savage as well as unprincipled nation.'

'On old May Day this year,' said my Talking Friend, 'almost all the valley went to see the first stone of the new Welsh bridge laid—and a long time it was a-building, not being opened till 1795—and pity it was that so noble an old structure had to be pulled down, with its fortified gates and towers. The old people could no more come home on a Saturday and tell their children how they had gazed upon King Taffy's effigies in the Welsh gate—for so the old statue, which is now on the market-hall, was always called, though without much reason, as you scholars know, for the statue was likely that of Richard Duke of York, the father of Edward IV. No doubt the arches were defective, and it was very narrow, but the old oak timbers in the towers would have stood for ages. I am but an oak, and an old one, but I think many noble fabrics have been hastily taken down which would have stood for ages, the ornaments of our towns.'

And the leaves of the old tree quivered, and he was dumb! Poor old Ursula Evans, whose child lay a-dying, when all the inhabitants of Hanwood went to Shrewsbury to see the gala sight, was scarcely more sad than the oak seemed to be as he spoke of the loss of the old Welsh Bridge! As for Ursula, she was like Agar in the desert—

> Poor Agar, from her sphere enforced to fly,
> In wilds Barsabian wandering alone,
> Doubting her child through helpless drought would die,
> Laid it adowne, and set her down to moane.

It is of this bridge that old Leland speaks: 'There be two greate massive Bridges of Stone on the wholl River of Severne at Shrewsbury. The greatest, fayrest, and highest upon the Streame is the Welsh Bridge, having six great arches of stone, so called because it is the way out of the Town into Walles. This Bridge standeth on the West Syde of the Towne, and hath at the end of it a great Gate to enter by into the Towne, and at the other end towardes Wales a mighty stronge Towre to prohibit Enemies to enter into the Bridge.'

Churchyard, in his 'Worthies of Wales,' thus introduces the mention of this grand old bridge: 'There is a Bridge called Welsh Bridge, which shewes Shrewsburie to be of Wales'; on which follow the lines:—

> Full from Welsch bridge, along by meddowes greene,
> The river runs, most fayre and fine to vewe;
> Such fruitful ground as this is seldome sene
> In many parts, if that I hear be true.
> Yet each man knowes that grasse is in his pride,
> And ayre is fresh, by every river's side;
> But sure this plot doth farre surpasse the rest,
> That by good lot is not with graces blest.

Good old Archdeacon Owen had evidently a great love for this venerable bridge, as the extract following will show, though the reader should turn to his account in full: 'The west side was probably built by Edward IV. The style of architecture, the statue of his father, and the great affection that prince had for the town, seem to point at this; and it is further confirmed by his device of the three roses, as that was the whole number of the Duke's eight sons who were then living—Henry, William, John, and Thomas having died young, and Edmund Earl of Rutland having been shot at the battle of Wakefield. In the year 1791, under an unhappy prejudice that it endangered the safety of the bridge, this beautiful and curious gate, the chiefest architectural ornament the town possessed, was demolished by order of the Corporation, to the regret of every person of taste, and every lover of antiquities acquainted with the transaction. The statue and shields were spared and placed in their present situations at the end of the market-house. The destruction of the bridge itself soon followed,' as we have seen; and we cannot wonder at the Old Oak's expression of deep regret.

My Talking Friend informed me that the summer of this year was as warm a one as he ever recollected, and that the fine weather continued almost till the end of it; and what he said is fully corroborated by letters of the time. Wilberforce, for instance, on his journey to Bath, tells us under July 9 that 'he was impeded by the unusual warmth of the weather'; and Walpole on the 17th writes to Conway 'of the

excessive heat we have had for twelve complete days,' adding, 'It is much cooler to-day, and yet delicious; for be it known to you that I have enjoyed weather worthy of Africa, and yet without swallowing mouthfuls of muskitos, nor expecting to hear hyænas howl in the village, nor to find scorpions in my bed.' Referring to this same glorious weather, Hannah More wrote to Bishop Porteus on August 12: 'Your friend Lord Orford and myself are, I believe, the only persons in the kingdom who are worthy of the hot weather, the only true genuine summer we have had for the last thirty years; we both agreed that it was perfectly celestial, and that it was quite scandalous to huff it away as some people did'—and she speaks of it as quite Italian.

Walpole, who loved genial warmth, writes to the Countess of Ossory on September 6: 'I have railed at our summers to your ladyship; this has been a superb one, and has constantly, contrary to the practice of its predecessors, recovered its temper instantly after the hardest showers of rain; consequently the verdure and leafage are in the highest perfection.' So again to the Misses Berry, Monday night, October 7: 'One word about our glorious weather and I have done. It even improves every day. I kept the window wide open till dinner-time to-day, and could do nothing but gaze at the brilliant beauty of the verdure. It is so equal to ordinary Julys, that one is surprised to see the sun set before six o'clock.'

As late as November 7 and 10 he still conveys to them the like information. 'Our weather remains unparagoned; Mrs. Hastings is not more brilliant: the elms are ever green.' On the 18th he adds: 'We have had some rain, even this last night; but the weather is fine all day, and quite warm. I believe it has made an assignation with the Glastonbury Thorn, and that they are to dance together on old Christmas Day.'

On October 16 poor Marie Antoinette was guillotined, and the horror felt through the valley was great. The Old Oak shuddered to his roots when the passers by dilated on the murder. But a few days before it took place Walpole had written to Hannah More: 'Oh! have not the last five years brought to light such infernal malevolence, such monstrous

crimes as mankind had grown civilised enough to disbelieve when they read anything similar in former ages; if, indeed, anything similar has been recorded. But I must not enter into what I dare not fathom. Catherine Slay-Czar triumphs over the good honest Poles; and Louis Seize perishes on a scaffold, the best of men; while the whole assemblies of fiends, calling themselves *men*, are from day to day meditating torment and torture for his heroic widow; on whom, with all their power and malice, and with every page, footman, and chambermaid of hers in their reach, and with the rack in their hands, they have not been able to fix a speck. Nay, do they not talk of the inutility of evidence? What other virtue ever sustained such an ordeal? But who can wonder when the Almighty Himself is called by one of these wretches the *soi-disant* God?'

So was the sceptic and the abettor of liberty constrained to write!

Referring again to local matters, my Talking Friend informed me that a good many people talked about the state of the churches all through the county. And certainly, in these days, all the churches in the land, as well as those of Hanwood and Pontesbury, wanted looking to—to say nothing of the cathedrals. Ever since the Hanoverian Succession little had been done, and almost all appointments were political rather than religious. Clergy and laity, and the high estates of the realm, all were more or less in fault; and when the *Bore* of the French Revolution came roaring in many there were who felt true religion and piety and a sound Christian education were the safeguards of the realm. Such men there were at Shrewsbury at this time, such as Hugh Owen of St. Julian's, John Brickdale Blakeway of St. Mary's, Richard de Courcy, Vicar of St. Alkmund's, and Thomas Stedman, Vicar of St. Chad's—the latter I well recollect, the two former were kind to me in my boyhood; but De Courcy, the extempore preacher, has passed away. All these were men, and have said—

> Cur eget indignus quisquam, te divite? Quare
> Templa ruunt antiqua deûm? Cur, improbe, caræ
> Non aliquid patriæ tanto emetiris acervo?

Turning to a very different subject. The only other bit of local information appertaining to the year given me by my Talking Friend was that, owing to the fineness of the summer, and the glossiness of the gravel on the shallows, the minnows in the Rea were multitudinous, and in the spawning season their tiny small scales might have been 'dipped in Tyrian woof.' And it reminded me of a curious passage in one of Cowper's letters. I have never seen what he mentions with respect to the minnows, but I have seen a dozen sticklebacks (clever fellows!) inspecting the nest of one of their fellows.

'Mrs. Unwin and I, crossing a brook, saw from the footbridge somewhat at the bottom of the water, which had the appearance of a flower. Observing it attentively, we found that it consisted of a circular assemblage of minnows; their heads all met in a centre; and their tails diverging at equal distances, and being elevated above their heads, gave them the appearance of a flower half blown. One was larger than the rest; and as often as a straggler came in sight, he quitted his place to pursue him, and having driven him away he returned to it again, no other minnow offering to take it in his absence. This we saw him do several times. The object that had attracted them all was a dead minnow, which they seemed to be devouring.'

Southey once told me, as quoted in an earlier page, that he had seen the minnows on the Greta forcing themselves up the Weir below Greta Hall, but Mr. Campbell, a very good naturalist and sportsman, thought he was mistaken. I have watched them often below the Weir at Meole, but never saw them leap, though they tried hard to get up against the ripple. Of the salmon there is no doubt, and the lines in Drayton's 'Polyolbion' before quoted are quite true.

In January 1794 my Talking Friend told me that the valley was enveloped in a thick fog, which would appear to have been general, for Walpole writes to Conway, 'Excepting a long succession of fogs, nobody talks of anything else.' Fogs in the valley of the Rea are common, but the mist, on a summer's or on an autumnal evening amongst the willow-trees is very beautiful, sometimes white and sometimes blue.

Wonderful shapes and figures have I formed from the mist in my boyhood.

> As when the setting sun has given
> Ten thousand hues to summer even,
> And from their tissue fancy frames
> Aerial knights and fairy dames.

Early this year, in January, the Bishop of Autun, the afterwards so celebrated Talleyrand, was ordered to quit England, for being engaged, no doubt, in some underhand diplomacy. He wrote to Madame d'Arblay on March 2, saying that he was about to start for America. 'Je quitte votre pays jusqu'au moment où il n'appartiendra plus aux petites passions des hommes. Je ne sais combien de temps je resterai en Amérique,' &c. Though a Bishop of France, he was not a man to say—

> He who will have his work his wished end to win,
> Let him with hearty prayer religiously begin.

His name is mentioned here because he was known to a most gentlemanly old abbé in Shrewsbury, for many years after connected with the old Roman Catholic Chapel by the Walls before you came to the Wyle Cop, and beloved by everyone. I have a full and perfect recollection of the old *émigré* in my boyhood, when I was at Mr. Case's school. My kind old friend Mr. Samuel Starky knew him well. He was said to have in his possession some curious fish-bones, which were a certain remedy for the cramp, far surpassing, as he said good-humouredly, all the eel-skins of the Severn!

What were these said fish-bones? Is it possible that they were bones of the Maigre? If so, the passage following from Yarrell's 'Fishes' may serve for an elucidation:—

'The two hard bones usually found just within the sides of the head in fishes are larger in proportion in the Maigre than in any other fish, and were supposed, the old writers say, to possess medicinal virtues. According to Belon, they were called colick-stones, and were worn on the neck, mounted in gold, to secure the possessor against this painful malady: to be quite effectual, it was pretended that the wearer must have received them as a gift; if they had been purchased, they had neither preventive nor curative power.'

In May this year—on the 22nd—the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and created a great sensation in the county and in the old town. The people in the valley did not understand much about the matter—they only said in the blacksmith's shop that from this time 'No man was allowed to have his carcase'—a very simple conception, and jokingly taken up at the 'Cock' and the 'Cross' by all the frequenters of the alehouse bench; amongst whom, about this time, old John Cotton the bricklayer, of Arlescot, and who still lived in my boyhood, began to attract notice. The old fellow always liked oysters for his supper on Saturday night—had a face like Bardolph's or Boniface's—was a wag and a humourist. It was he who told the old Squire of Cruckton, who complained of his bricks being somewhat too little, 'Neither you nor I, Squire, know what a very little means!' And his cheeks rolled from side to side, as though he had long been considering the theory of Atoms! A striking fine family were the Cottons—his son, my old friend John, is still alive, but his head is grey and his limbs are stiff. Formerly they were clever fishermen, and if a fish was to be caught in the brook, they knew how and where to catch it, from the Weir-hole at Hanwood to Marton Pool.

The celebrated trials connected with the suspension of the Habeas Corpus did not come on till October 2, nor were they popular. And yet it was time, to say the least, that something should be done, when John Baxter, a labourer, was employed to circulate, in a play-bill form, for the benefit of John Bull, '*La Guillotine, or, George's Head in a Basket.*' It was John Thelwall who said, as he blew off the head from a pot of porter, 'This is the way I would have all kings served.' Well might Wilberforce write down in his Diary, 'Read Tom Paine's Age of Reason: God defend us from such poison!'

> The paths he walks lead far away
> From those that guide the sinner's feet
> Towards the heavenly mercy-seat.

About the middle of June there were rejoicings in the valley for Lord Howe's victory over the French Fleet on June 1.

The retreat of the army under the Duke of York, and our ill-success by land, was a trouble to the nation, but little, comparatively, was known in the valley of the Rea. It resulted in his recall, though he did not return to England till January 22, 1795, when he was 'advanced to the rank of Field-Marshal, and appointed Commander-in-Chief of his Majesty's land forces.' It was on September 28 that Walpole wrote to the Misses Berry: 'The Sunday's paper announced a dismal defeat of Clairfait; and now, if true, I doubt the French will drive the Duke of York into Holland, and then into the sea! Ora pro nobis.' Such were the dismal forbodings of the day.

Some time in July the news of that atrocious monster Robespierre's death reached the valley. He was guillotined at Paris on the 10th, and many must have breathed more easily, though revolutionary terror was not yet brought to an end, and France had more to suffer.

It was in the month of August this year that Southey, Lovell, and Coleridge concocted the 'Fall of Robespierre,' printed in the 'Remains' of J. T. Coleridge. The reader may see an account of it in a letter from Southey to my old friend Henry Nelson Coleridge, which is inserted in the 'Life and Correspondence.'

The summer of this year was another of those glorious ones which we every now and then have to our great delight, and my Talking Friend said that it was surprising the mid-summer-shoots he made even at his advanced years.

Again the Old Oak's memory had not failed him, and, as usual, he was a faithful chronicler. For, on July 22, Walpole writes to the Countess of Ossory (I still call him Walpole, for he said it seemed like calling him names in his old age to call him Lord Orford) that he had been unable to wait on Lady Warwick owing 'to the excessive heat of the mornings. I little thought I should have to complain of the violence of an English summer, but this has been so torrid as to make me seriously ill; though, I believe, less from its warmth than from my own extreme weakness.' In a subsequent letter to the Misses Berry under September 27 he gives the curious anecdote of the Bishop of Chichester and the supposed ghost,

(an escaped female lunatic), and says, 'it occurred in the hot weather of this last summer.'

Old Francis Ferrington came to his work through the fields called the Patches, and he said that the cattle lived in the brook during the heat of the day, pouring water on their backs with their tails, so as to drive off the flies, and that he could hear the great chubs *blobbing* in the deep holes under the willows as he passed.

Meanwhile Walpole could see no end to coming trouble, particularly in France: 'It is a stupendous and horrible chaos, and I know not out of what ark a Noah is to dispatch a dove with an olive branch, nor where he will find one to gather—roots and branches all seem to be plucked up!' This was on July 29, and on October 6 he still writes to his old correspondent, the Countess: 'I cannot agree with your ladyship in thinking the bickerings at Paris will come to nothing; though timid of conjecture, as after so many disappointments, I cannot conceive how, where there is no stability, there can be a permanent Government. Till some very great man arises—and I see none of the brand—how will the country be settled?'

Would Walpole have called Napoleon a great one?

The following is quite a *locus classicus*, as dear old Bishop Butler would have told us, as he bade us to remember it. It was written October 6, and he is expressing his fears that Lady Bute was *going*—that softened form which in most nations bespeaks the

Calcanda semel via leti.

'Having come into the world where there were such beings as women that did grow old, she had remembered that odd fashion, and did not set out at midnight for all the crowds in town. But I am talking like Methusalem, and no wonder, for I have tapped my seventy-eighth year, and like other veterans, who think that all manners, customs, and agreeableness were in perfection just when they were one-and-twenty, and have degenerated ever since, and I am lamenting the loss of my contemporaries, as if the world ought to be peopled by us Struldbrugs. It would be a dull world indeed, and all

conversation would consist of our old stories, which I cannot think with the newspaper, make us venerable, but tiresome. Here am I living to see the opening of a court of a fourth George, though I was ten years old when I kissed the hand of the first, which young people must think was soon after the Deluge, and perhaps be desirous of asking me how soon there was any races after the waters had subsided.' He adds in the last letter he wrote this year, 'Lady Bute is a great loss to me; she was the only remaining one of my contemporaries who had submitted to grow old, and to stay at home in an evening.' She was Lady Mary Wortley's daughter.

I may add that at the conclusion of this letter, coupling his name with that of Hume, he seems to assert that their tenets were the pioneers to the French Revolution. 'For Voltaire, with his *n'est-ce pas mieux comme cela!* he avowed, treating history to be a wardrobe of ancient habits, that he would cut, and alter, and turn just what dresses he pleased; and having made so free with all modes, and manners, and measures, and left truth out of his *régime*, his journeymen and apprentices learnt to treat all uniforms as cavalierly: and beginning by stripping mankind of all clothes, they next plundered them of every rag, and then butchered both men and women that they might have no occasion even for a fig-leaf; a lovely history will that of their transactions be.'

The end of the year was wild and stormy, and the Rea and the Cruckton brooks never knew how to keep their bounds. As usual, the Severn found its way into Frankwell, causing much damage. Walpole again writes to the Countess of Ossory, saying that he had been twice shut up at Strawberry Hill, in his little ark, by two new editions of the 'Deluge,' 'the amplest we ever knew since my grandfather Noah's, except one twenty years ago, when the late Duchess of Northumberland was overtaken by it on the road, and was forced to ride with her two legs out of the windows, in the front of her post-chaise.'

Old John Diggory—carpenter, humourist, and fisherman—was at the 'Lea Cross' in those days, and he said that the flood of the next year was tremendous, and came more than half-way up the road. So rapid was it, that many fishes

were left on the field-sides dead when it fell, and that afterwards many fishes and eels were to be caught in the ditches.

Poor John Diggory! I remember thee well, first as a boy, and till I was advanced to more than man's estate—long, indeed, after my return from Copenhagen. In the year 1795, of which I am now writing, he was in the prime of his manhood, and he lived till March 22, 1859, when he died, and was buried at the very advanced age of fourscore and eighteen. Though blind in his latter years, he was keen-sighted in his younger ones, had seen much, observed much, and knew all the queerest stories of the country. John was a bachelor to the end, and put no trust in women; ought to have been rich, but died blind and poor, though not in actual poverty. John was never known to be drunk, though all his life long he never could resist the good ale at the 'Lea Cross,' which was close by his home. Comus might have said of him:—

> I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
> And well-placed words of glozing courtesy
> Baited with reasons not unplausible,
> Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
> And hug him into snares.

Being in the churchyard of Pontesbury, November 1, 1861, I most unexpectedly lighted upon his tombstone there, and at once copied down the inscription, with which I was greatly pleased; for I liked him well, and in my boyhood had teased his heart out by injuring his planes, straining his saws, and hammering into the doorpost of his shop all the nails I could lay my hands on. The inscription is given in an earlier page, and the stone was erected as a tribute of respect by his nephew.

The great flood above referred to was early in February, and my Talking Friend said that the whole valley of the Rea was again deluged, and that the otters took to the woods for fear of being drowned out. In the Severn the flood lasted from the 7th to the 11th, and it is said to have been six and a half inches above the great flood of November 18, 1770. Old Hester Deakes brought word from

Shrewsbury to Hanwood that Mr. Johnson of the Can office and his man were drowned in trying to land a large barrel. She was *boated* through Frankwell, and had the greatest difficulty in reaching the boat-house bank, having to pull over the garden grounds above it.

During the whole of this year great dissatisfaction was manifested throughout the kingdom owing to the high price of bread. Indeed, it almost amounted to famine price. In these days, said my Talking Friend, your venerable great uncle lived in the house hard by, and never sold a bushel of wheat off the ground, but let the poor around him have it at the usual cost, which was remembered well in my childhood, for all the people loved him, and used to tell of it with an honest pride. As I have said in 'THE LAST OF THE OLD SQUIRES,' 'the good old man might have taken rank with the Dalmatian "Gens Anicia," who, at Rome, in A.D. 717, got the name of *à Frangepanibus*. The Tiber at that time overflooded its banks, and the people were rescued from the flood in the boats of Flavius Anicius, 'who added,' says Mr. Wingfield in his 'Tour in Dalmatia, Albania, and Montenegro,' 'to his work of beneficence by distributing bread amongst the sufferers.' Some such a good man as the above was R. Prynce, who, when the Plague raged in Shrewsbury in 1576, gave up his corn for the use of the people there! What a pleasant thing it is to read of these lowly, charitable souls!

Late in the year it was currently reported that the King had been shot at, but happily without harm. This was on October 29, as he was proceeding in state to Westminster to open Parliament. Continuous and prolonged were the shouts of 'Bread! bread!' 'Peace! peace!' It was on entering the space between New and Old Palace Yard that the shot was fired, and passed through the windows of the state coach in which the King was seated. As on other occasions, he showed his wonted courage. 'On this occasion,' says Lord Eldon, in his Anecdote Book, 'the attendant, who was one of the great officers of state, started at the shot striking the window of the state coach and passing through it. "Sit still, sir," said the King, "let us not betray any fear of what

may happen."' In those times I have heard him say that he might perhaps be the last King of England. He was certainly a person of great courage. When Hatfield shot at him at the play-house, and when Margaret Nicholson tried to assassinate him, he betrayed no fear. When, in the year 1780, his Privy Councillors hesitated what advice to give him he said 'he should act without their advice, and would order his horse to the door, that he might go at the head of his troops in person, and give them orders to disperse the rioters by force.'

Perhaps no one knows how the poor King's heart was tried at this time, for, if he was obstinate, he was most tender-hearted, and I might refer to the old poet just quoted, and say—

> Then love that heart, where lies no faithless seed,
> That never wore dissimulation's weed.

Many people have thought, and perhaps not without reason, that this is one of the most perilous years the country has ever passed through. But it was well said by the King to Lords Westmoreland and Onslow, 'One person is proposing this, and another is supposing that, forgetting that there is ONE above us all who disposes of everything, and on whom alone we depend.'

Early in the year 1796—it occurred on January 7—word was brought to the old town, and thence to Hanwood and Cruck Meole, that a princess was born at Carlton House—the afterwards well-known Princess Charlotte—and it was the cause of great joy throughout the nation generally, and in the little valley of the Rea; for it seemed the likeliest means of cementing differences, and of inculcating home affections in a palace. In this very year it was that Southey wrote his 'Hymn to the Penates,' in which he so touchingly says of Home—

> There is a magic in that little word:
> It is a mystic circle that surrounds.
> Comforts and distress never known beyond
> That hallowed limit.

But the then Prince of Wales was not one to value such

feelings, and all his after-life showed how easy it is to make woman's life miserable!

My Talking Friend recollected that the July rains of this year were most refreshing, and that, old as he was, his mid-summer-shoots were strong. Probably there was a considerable rainfall, as Walpole writes to the Countess of Ossory: 'I try to make my soaking hay my principal distress, for the newspapers are too vexatious.' He does not mention the troubles in Ireland, which were considerable. The old Sir Watkin Wynn was there at that time, and told strange stories of one Friar Patrick.

The rains of July were succeeded by glorious weather, which, writing to Miss Berry, then at Bognor, under August 20, Walpole calls 'an oriental season;' and, under September 2, he says to the Countess of Ossory: 'Our harvests have been gorgeous, Madam, indeed; even our farmers acknowledge it—the least they could do to compensate for the scarcity they proclaimed last year, and, in part, I believe, only feigned. I wish plenty may be followed by peace.' On the starvation prices Walpole was misinformed, for the times were very hard, and the prices of wheat extraordinary. On the other hand, his wish for peace was reciprocated by the people in general, for they were tired of war. Still looking to France and the costs of war, he wrote to Hannah More, saying: 'Are not all the devils escaped out of the swine, and overrunning the earth headlong?' She must have had influence with him, or he had not written: 'Adieu, thou who mightest be one of the cleverest of women if thou didst not prefer being *one* of the best! And when I say *one* of the best, I have not engaged my vote for the second. Yours most gratefully.'

The latter part of the year was intensely cold, and our old correspondent, Horace Walpole, writes word to Richard Couch, Esq., the antiquarian, on December 5, that the 'intense cold of last week had brought on gouty inflammation.' This hard weather began as early as November 6. As usual, in hard weather, there were many wild fowl about, and the long meadow and the marshy ground by the Lea Cross and Short-hill, and above Sibberscott, were covered with snipe.

In those days some kind and good old ladies lived over

the brook at Meole, and they had the greatest difficulty in preserving their tame robins and moorhens, who came regularly to be fed, from starvation. The Misses Harries were their names, and never were Norwegians more alive to the wants of feathered fowl, when the snow was thick, and the earth ice-bound, and the fieldfare had left the Dovre Fjeld for England and other warmer spots lest he should die for want, still crying '*queesh, queesh,*' as he fled. And having mentioned Norway, which years ago I visited with delight, I will close the year with an extract from a volume just published.

'The winters in Norway are, of course, very long, while the snow remains on the ground for months at a time. Naturally the small birds suffer during wet, inclement weather, and numbers of them perish with hunger. Now the Norwegians are unusually kind to dumb creatures, and when a fall of snow takes place, a sheaf of corn is fixed on a high pole in the open air, and the birds come and feed on it. This is considered a time of rejoicing with Norwegian children, and when the pole with the sheaf of corn attached is raised, cakes and sweetmeats are given to the children ; which is not only making the ceremony one of innocent pleasure, but is a simple way of inculcating kind feelings in the hearts of the children themselves. Although the Norwegian people hold fast to the manners and customs of their forefathers, it must be confessed that many of these old usages would be creditable to modern civilisation.'

And so ends the year 1796 ; and methought as I looked on the time-worn boughs of my Talking Friend that the nymphs of old romance must be far advanced :—

> Those nymphs in mighty forests, that with oaks
> Have equal fates, each with her several tree,
> Receiving birth, and ending destiny.

And I bethought me too of the grandeur of this old oak in days gone by—in itself a grove, as Ovid tells in the 'Metamorphoses' :—

> Ingens annoso robore quercus,
> Una nemus.

Somewhere about the year 1797, said my Talking Friend,

on hearing the rustle of a silk gown, the valley was visited by an old pedlar, one of the many 'cheap Georges' of the day, who had been a great traveller. Some said he had been as far as Constantinople, and that he had seen the Great Turk; others that he had visited Samarcand, and had heard of Prester John, which, I suppose with Milton, means Priest:

New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.

Whether or not, he was the first in the valley that could show the grub of the silkworm and his cocoon, having learnt, in the islands of the Levant, to know the value of the mulberry-leaf and tree, when the people, who gather for us their currants—the Corintos, so called from old Corinth—

set to work millions of spinning worms
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk.

Amongst other things which he carried with him was a small tortoise which, when they got over the small fright, greatly amused the children. Old Jos, the weaver, who lived at Cruckton, and with whom he had dealings, was a great friend of the pedlar's, and repeated many of his stories about Turkey with a wondrous gravity; for Jos was the most superstitious of men, and had seen visions. I have mentioned his name before, and can just remember his turned-up eyes and long grave face, and his stories of

Plots and packing, worse than those of Trent.

Early in the spring of this year the victory off Cape St. Vincent—the battle was fought on February 14—gave great satisfaction to the nation in general. Sir John Jervis, as is well known, was raised to the peerage as Earl of St. Vincent, but it was the name of Nelson that now began to be talked of in the valley—a name which even yet rains influence. He had in this fight shown of what metal he was made, and for his gallant conduct received the Order of the Bath—which the people thought little enough, for he had lost an eye at the siege of Calvi in 1794. Later, in the present year, he had his arm shattered at Santa Cruz, Teneriffe—an unsuccessful attempt, but one in which Nelson as usual was to the fore, and the prestige of his name continued. The people

had not cause to say of him as Lafeu says of Parolles: 'The soul of this man is in his clothes; trust him not in matter of heavy consequence.' On the contrary, he became the nation's trusty sailor, and our then wooden-walls were safe in his keeping, and the sailors loved him. Had he been at the head of the Admiralty, the mutiny of Spithead had never broken out on April 15 following, for no one now would defend a pressgang, and the common sailor was an ill-used man.

And from this time forward Nelson's name was well known in the valley of the Rea, as well as by every bargeman from Bristol to Shrewsbury—indeed, almost every bargeman fancies himself something of a sailor!

About this time died one not known in the Valley, but one to whom these pages are much indebted—the well-known letter-writer, Horace Walpole, or, as he would be called by the world, Lord Orford. He had been failing for some time, and departed this life March 2, having never rallied from the cold of the winter. It was as early as September 2, 1796, that he wrote to the Countess of Ossory, saying: 'I am pinned to my couch, and only move from one side of the room to the other, like a coat of arms, by two supporters; and even my motto of *fari quæ sentiat*, you see, Madam, I must deliver by a herald.' His last letter to his old and faithful correspondent is painfully striking. She had pressed him to write to her again, thinking probably that it might take him out of himself. His reply is dated January 15, and concludes thus: 'Oh! my good Madam, dispense with me from such a task, and think how it must add to it to apprehend such letters being shown. Pray send me no more such laurels, which I desire no more than their leaves when decked with a scrap of tinsel and stuck on twelfth-cakes lie on the shop-boards of pastrycooks at Christmas. I shall be quite content with a sprig of rosemary thrown after me, when the parson of the parish commits my dust to dust. Till then, pray, Madam, accept the resignation of your Ancient Servant, ORFORD.'

The collected Correspondence of Horace Walpole—whatever his religious or political views—must be acknowledged to be very valuable The French Revolution evidently

staggered him in his views of liberty, and the avowed infidelity of the Convention influenced his future letters. His scepticism diminished as license increased; and it may be inferred from his letters to Hannah More especially that his thoughts were more serious.

Some time in May, said my Talking Friend, there was great bell-ringing and feastings in Shrewsbury, and the valley as usual went forth to see the fun, and to join in the merry-makings; for then as now all Shropshire people loved holidays, and births and marriages were jovially kept and celebrated from one end of the county to the other. Shakspeare's observation is true to human nature at such times:—

> As 'tis ever common
> That men are merriest when they are from home.

The cause of the festival time alluded to by my Talking Friend was no doubt the marriage of the Princess Royal with Frederick Charles William, afterwards King of Wurtemberg, which took place on May 18. The late Sir Henry W. W. Wynn, who was long at Wurtemberg, and knew her well, used to speak of her as the most amiable of womankind, and how attached George III. was to her is known to everyone.

On July 8 this year England lost no common man—the celebrated Edmund Burke—a testimony to whose great and honourable name may be seen in Dr. Parr's edition of Bellendenus, which was printed ten years before his death—that is, in 1787. Beneath the engraving are these lines from Lucretius, which he applied to Memmius, as one that had no peer, and was rich in every grace:—

> Quem tu, dea, tempore in omni
> Omnibus ornatum voluisti excellere rebus.

He died at his seat called Gregories in the parish of Beaconsfield, and there he was buried on July 17. So long as the history of these times are read his name will be found in its pages.

My Talking Friend spoke of heavy thunderstorms occurring this summer and drenching the hay. Dr. Burney tells of a 'fearful storm' which broke on his return from Burke's

funeral. The same is entered in Wilberforce's journal under July 17: 'Last night a dreadful thunderstorm. Poor Lord St. Helens' house burnt down.' Wherever one is, one is sure to hear soon enough of ill-tidings and ill-luck.

> Ill-luck, for speed, of all things else is cheap;
> For as the blind man sang, 'Time so provides
> That joy goes still on foot, and sorrow rides.'

The result of the storms above mentioned was considerable alteration in many parts of the stream. Bit by bit was torn off the banks of the Rea, which at first, though small and inconsiderable to all appearance—like the petty thefts of the negro, who day after day will hide a nail or two in the work of his hands, till he collects a heap—within a while filled up one hole and made another, turning what was water ponded up into a gravelly shallow. This was particularly the case in those fields called the Patches, and was the evident origin of their name. It was fine fishing we had there in the days of our boyhood, when minnows even and gudgeons, to say nothing of dace, roach, and chub, were no contemptible captures; but the glory was to catch the trout and the pike!

> Thus in the thought of those forepassed years
> Some new resemblance of old joy appears.

Late in this year, quite at the close of it, died the celebrated demagogue Wilkes; but I do not remember that he is mentioned at this time by either Southey or Coleridge. As we have before seen, his name had been well known in the valley, but he had lived down his democracy.

'The old age of Wilkes was not an ungraceful one. "His powers of conversation," writes Sir Nathanael Wraxall, "survived his other bodily faculties. I have dined in company with him not long before his decease, when he was extenuated and enfeebled to a great degree; but his tongue retained all its former activity, and seemed to have outlived his other organs. Even in corporeal ruin, and obviously approaching the termination of his career, he formed the charm of the assembly." Wilkes survived till December 26, 1797, when he expired at his house in Grosvenor Square, at the south-west corner of South Audley Street, in his seventy-first year,' as

was before stated in an earlier page. And must one say with Hamlet, reading the lines as I find them :—

> The dram of base
> Doth all else noble substance oft infect
> To his own scandal ?

'About this time there was missed on the road between Plealey and Shrewsbury,' said my Talking Friend, 'a very remarkable man, and one well known to your uncle John, as a Cambridge man ; a kindly man he was, and a learned, and one much respected by all his neighbours. They called him Doctor, and Professor ; but notwithstanding his great parts, he accommodated himself to the manners and usages of those around him, and as the wayfarer crossed his path he wished him always a hearty "Good morrow."'

The person here alluded to was Dr. Edward Waring, the well-known mathematician of his day, and Lucasian Professor. He was a Shropshire man by extraction, being born at Metton, in the parish of Fitz, in the year 1734, and by education an old Shrewsbury boy, from whose schools he went to Cambridge with a Millington's Exhibition in 1753, and came out senior wrangler in 1757. Of his appointment, when so young, to the Lucasian chair, and of the controversy with Dr. Powell, Master of St. John's, it is not necessary to speak here, or of his several steps in life, and of his abstruse mathematical publications, by which he gained a European fame, as the successor of Newton, Saunderson, and Barrow. It will be enough to say that he chose Physic as his line, and proceeded a Doctor in that Faculty in 1767, practising for a while at St. Ives. He does not, however, seem to have made himself a name in medicine, being absorbed in other studies, and having married a Miss Mary Oswell, of Shrewsbury, he within a while left St. Ives, and Cambridge, and came to reside here. It did not, some way or another, suit Mrs. Waring, and so he took up his residence at Plealey, in the parish of Pontesbury, and there became known to all the country round as the simplest and plainest of men. He had a small estate there, and there he lived, and there he died on August 15, 1798, in his 64th year. So I find it stated in

Archdeacon Owen, and if so, this little memorial should have been thrown into the year following, but it was about this time that my Talking Friend missed him.

My father knew Dr. Waring well, and his brother, the Rev. John Warter, M.A., was of the same college with him (Magdalene), and died there in the year of his Proctorship. In those days the old Gullet Club existed in Shrewsbury, and when not in Shrewsbury the Professor used to come there from Plealey, where the members of it, as a joke, constantly called upon him to cast up and divide the 'shot,' knowing that he was sure to do it wrong, though so great a mathematician. It reminds me of the following from Spence's 'Anecdotes': 'Sir Isaac Newton, though so deep in algebra and fluxions, could not readily make up a common account, and, when he was Master of the Mint, used to get somebody to make up his accounts for him.'

It is pleasant to read of such simple, modest, unobtrusive men, who served their generation well, rejoicing to do good! It is a pretty line in the 'Frogs' of Aristophanes, as applied to Sophocles—

'Ο δ' εὔκολος μὲν ἐνθάδ', εὔκολος δ' ἐκεῖ.

The little things of life make up the great things, and pleasant company, pleasant associations, and pleasant memories cannot be treasured too much.

What they were, I know not, but my Talking Friend said that many troubles befel the valley about this time, and that the old homestead of Meole was not without its share in them; but there were two brothers there, John and Henry, who stood up well before the world, and the one may be supposed to have said to the other, as the elder brother said in the 'Comus'—

> Peace, brother, be not over-exquisite
> To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;
> For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
> What need a man foretaste his date of grief,
> And run to meet what he would most avoid?

And, in truth, I have often thought that the old Greek proverb about Camarina—the Palus Camarina, formed by

the stagnation of the Hipparis, and close to the walls of the city on the north—was of the widest acceptation :—

Μὴ κίνει Καμάριναν · ἀκίνητος γὰρ ἀμείνων

He's but a fool
That stirreth Camarina's pool ;
Better unstirred is that foul spot,
Where the sedge doth rot.

We need not be in haste to anticipate trouble, for it is sure to come, and when it comes it is to be borne with patience and Christian humility. And so thought the benevolent old man of the Upper House at Meole, who fed the poor during the whole time of dearth, going forth pleasantly to hunt, and when the frost was hard, and there was no hunting, then taking to his old-fashioned stalking-horse, which remained in the store-room till the early years of the present century, when my father recollected seeing it.

The commencement of the year 1798 was not a happy one, for the people, even in the valley of the Rea, from Cause Castle to Colcham, were dissatisfied with Mr. Pitt's new tax ; and perhaps the National Voluntary Subscription had something in it of what is now called 'The Voluntary System,' which is rather a name than a reality, and not altogether different, in some ways, from Lucretius' definition of space—

Qua propter locus est intactus, inane, vacansque.

In those days there were some excellent Unitarian ladies—nominally such, at least, but really, I am inclined to suspect, advanced Christians, only retaining the appellation. Their name was Hughes, and they lived in the Ivy House at Hanwood, adjoining the church. Periodically they were in the habit of going to Shrewsbury to attend the Unitarian service at the chapel in High Street, where Mr. Rowe officiated, to whom they were much attached, and were much troubled at his leaving for Bristol that year. Good, excellent creatures were Miss Mary and Mrs. Howel Hughes, and I remember them well, and their kindness to me as a child !

It was upon Mr. Rowe's resignation that his friends persuaded Coleridge to offer himself on probation as Unitarian minister, which brings his name in connection with the old

town and Hanwood; for the late Mrs. Witts, *née* Maria Wood, the daughter of Colonel Wood, of Hanwood House, recollected his coming, and the peculiarity of his dress. He said he was respectfully and kindly treated at Shrewsbury, but the enjoyment fell through owing to the offer of the Wedgwoods, though it appears from a letter of his to Cottle, dated February 18, that he proposed offering himself to the Bridgewater Socinian congregation as assistant minister, without any salary. So restless was he at this time, and ever after. His 'Religious Musings' are dated 1794, and in them he speaks of 'the Saviour of mankind.' It is hard to reconcile this with the present step in 1798, as well as the following in the same poem:—

> For in His own and in His Father's might
> The Saviour comes!

But Coleridge was not the only one who had his vagaries; but, as I laid me down beside the stream of my childhood—the Rea I loved so well—

> Per quem cum murmure labens
> Invitat somnos crepitantibus unda lapillis,

I bethought me of the wan and weird old Isaac Cadman, of whom

> The old back-time-dating chronicler

spoke even till my day. Never man living held stranger and queerer notions. Restless, at times, as the sea, he would have said with the madman in the 'Duchess of Malfi': 'I cannot sleep; my pillow is stuffed with a litter of porcupines;' at others, like the Indian savage after a full meal, he would sleep for days, as though the Cave of Sleep was his own domicile—

> Ignavi domus et penetralia Somni.

He was neither conjuror nor wizard, nor was he disliked as such a sort of people are apt to be; and yet, after his own fashion, he dwelt in all sorts of spells and superstitious observances. He believed in divining-rods, and would constantly sit cross-legged for luck, and when he was muttering to himself ignorant people might have thought the words were

> Backward mutters of dissevering power;

but, in truth, the simple old man was but an innocent, or what is called in the north of England 'half-saved,' and the people at large treated him tenderly, and were even kind to him, as the Turks are to idiots. Anyone who should have injured him would have been looked upon as a mean, paltry fellow, only fit to collect smoke-farthings and hearth-money. And I bethought me how many, less innocent than old Isaac Cadman, maintain, in some secret cranny of their hearts, as queer notions as he did.

> How superstitiously we mind our evils !
> The throwing down of salt, or crossing of a hare,
> Bleeding at nose, the stumbling of a horse,
> Or singing of a cricket, are of power
> To daunt the whole man in us.

My Talking Friend spoke of the midsummer of this year as very fine, and said there was a wonderful crop of hay in the Cruckton meadows. He said, moreover, that the Cruckton brook was full of fine speckled trouts, which loved to nestle in the sedge and yellow water-lilies there, and that his brethren the oaks were so full of acorns, and the hazels so full of nuts that the squirrels were busy from morning till night. So fond was the Old Oak of country matters, that his words were like a picture.

Buonaparte schemes and movements were now a talk in the valley, and Dr. Holland, at this time the rector of Hanwood, being fond of politics, and constantly in Shrewsbury, used to bring the freshest news to the old homestead, where he was a frequent visitor. At present it was the Toulon scheme that excited the most attention, but men doubted whether he would sail for the Mediterranean, or the West Indies, or whether he would make a descent on Ireland. But such were not the views of Buonaparte, though, as is well known, an expedition of the French did land in the Bay of Killala on August 22, and marched to Castlebar ; but it was a vain and useless attempt, and they surrendered at discretion on September 8.

Meanwhile, a matter of much greater importance had taken place—nothing less than the Battle of the Nile, on August 1. The month was far advanced when the news

reached the valley ; but when it came, the people were overjoyed, and the 'Cock' and the 'Lea Cross' were deluged with ale.

From accidental circumstances this glorious victory was talked of at the Marsh, and at Hanwood, and throughout the valley of the Rea for more than half a century afterwards ; for that tender, benevolent, excellent, and most charitable man, the late Captain John Witts, sometime of Lydles Hayes, where his father was the clergyman, was a lieutenant on board the 'Swiftsure,' and helped to man the boats which saved the French sailors on the blowing up of 'L'Orient.' How often have I heard him quietly tell the story, and the sufferings they underwent with Abercrombie behind Alexandria! Many (amongst whom he was one) never lost the dysentery contracted from the brackish water of the desert till their dying day. It stuck to them like the well-known Walcheren fever.

Captain Witts, in his early boyhood, was an old Shrewsbury boy. He married Maria Wood, of Hanwood, eldest daughter of Colonel Wood, who served long in India, and left behind him a MS. of the Rohilla wars. Amongst his naval friends was Captain Hallowell, of whom I have heard him tell many racy anecdotes, for he was a lad of the old school. Amongst others is the following, which I cannot do better than give in Southey's words :—

'Part of the "Orient's" mainmast was picked up by the "Swiftsure." Captain Hallowell ordered his carpenter to make a coffin of it ; the iron, as well as the wood, was taken from the wreck of the same ship ; it was finished as well and handsomely as the workman's skill and materials would permit, and Hallowell then sent it to the admiral with the following letter : "Sir,—I have taken the liberty of presenting you a coffin made from the mainmast of 'L'Orient,' that when you have finished your military career in this world you may be buried in one of your trophies. But that that period may be far distant is the earnest wish of your sincere friend,—BENJAMIN HALLOWELL."'

The only other local matter that I recollect my Talking

Friend mentioning as respects this year is that the bust of the great philanthropist Howard, by Bacon, was placed over the gateway of the new gaol at Shrewsbury.

Early this year—the year 1799—my Talking Friend said that he lost two or three great boughs, and that his head, suffering much from the autumn and winter storms, did not throw out during summer as it had hitherto done. But, even to this time, Southey might have looked at him for these lines in the 'Joan of Arc,' which had been recently published :—

> Like a strong oak, amid the tempest's rage,
> That stands unharm'd, and while the forest falls,
> Uprooted round, lifts his high head aloft,
> And nods majestic to the wandering wind.

At the beginning of 1799 the question of the Irish Union was one that engrossed men's minds. Ireland, indeed, before Spenser's days, when some wished that 'all that land were a sea-poole,' had been a source of great trouble, and was so still ; but it was a question if the land had ever been well governed, and it was now currently reported, to our great scandal, that the torture had been resorted to for the discovery of concealed crime, and many believed it.

It may be, as Eudoxus says in the view of the state of Ireland just referred to, 'a vaine conceipt of simple men,' but the words of Irenæus are still ominous ones. 'They say it is the fatal destiny of that land, that no motions whatsoever, which are meant for her good, will prosper, or take good effect, which, whether it proceed from the very genius of the soil, or influence of the storms, or that Almighty God hath not yet appointed the time of her reformation, or that He reserved her in this unquiet state still for some secret scourge, which shall by her come unto England, it is hard to be known, and yet much to be feared.' *A bad omen!* For the secret scourge arises first in one shape, and then in another, and there is always arising that '*little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand.*'

Have we done all we might for this our neighbour isle? —for, as Milton said in his noble sonnet to Cromwell,

> Peace hath her victories
> No less renown'd than war—

if we have not, no wonder that she is still what she is, the eyesore of England, as Cythera was that of the Peloponnese. 'There is an island called Cythera,' said Democrates to Xerxes, 'in those parts, not far from the coast, concerning which Chilon, one of our wisest men, made the remark that Sparta would gain if it were sunk to the bottom of the sea, so constantly did he expect that it would give exercise to some project like that which I now recommend to thee'—which was a sort of Fenian landing there.

January 1 appears to have been severe. My Talking Friend said that pieces of his outer bark peeled off, and that he frequently heard the creaking of the wild goose wings on their way to Marton Pool. It was severe in other parts also, for Southey wrote to his brother Tom from Westbury that the bread there was so hard frozen that 'no one in the house except myself could cut it, and it made my arm ache for the whole day.'

The trial of Gilbert Wakefield took place late in February this year, which is mentioned here because Colonel Wood knew him at Warrington before he came to reside at Hanwood, and took some interest in him. Shrewsbury boys recollect him as the editor of Lucretius, but it was but little they could pick out of those four volumes, and the *farrago* of notes. I rather think that Southey visited him in Dorchester gaol.

The spring months appear to have been genial ones, and, as usual, all the boys and girls of the country went flower-gathering in the Hanwood coppices, and in the lovely dell by the Rea-side, untainted then with the poisonous acids of the manufactory. Never were more lovely flowers than might have been gathered in that retired dell! Within my recollection the columbine grew there in such abundance that it appeared indigenous, and there was the *Circæum*, or 'enchanter's nightshade,' with its delicate flower and stem, to say nothing of the 'omnis copia narium' all around.

> Nor will the needle nor the loom ere be
> So perfect in their best embroidery,
> Nor such comparison make of silk and gold
> As theirs, when Nature all her cunning told.

It was hereabouts that old Deborah Tench culled simples for the apothecaries in Shrewsbury, who had in their employ a boy known all the country round, who received that old dame's collections, and any others that could be found between Shrewsbury and Minsterley. As is well-known, herbals and herbalists were then in more repute than now. Like to that boy, one may suppose, was the one mentioned in the 'Comus':—

> A certain shepherd lad,
> Of small regard to see to, but well skilled
> In every virtuous plant and healing herb
> That spreads her verdant leaf to th' morning ray.

The summer months, notwithstanding the fine spring, were doubtful ones, and much fear was entertained for the harvest, which was nevertheless partly got in; but the yield was not good, and till the very end of the year the fears of the people were excited, and the price of bread was high. But all this made little difference to the old homestead of Meole, where those employed upon the ground had their corn and meal at the same price as usual. The produce of his fields was not

> like rank corn that grows
> On cottages, that none or reaps or sows.

At the fall of the leaf this year, and on the first flood, a most extraordinary quantity of eels was taken in the brook, both in 'Small Patches' and at the weir-bolt at Meole. The eels of the Rea from time immemorial have been some of the best in the county; and although the Severn abounds in them, the country people found a ready market in Shrewsbury for all that they could catch and carry there. No doubt, in early Norman days, many a '*Stiche*' was paid by this stream, the eel, as may be seen in Domesday Book, being one portion of the rent. Great quantities of eels remained in the Rea till very lately, but the bridge from the lead-mines above, and the filth of the manufactories below, have sadly interfered with the fine fishing of my boyhood. The trout have nearly disappeared, and all other sorts of fish are far less numerous.

Nothing else of importance is mentioned in the valley

this year, but December 14—though the fact was not known on the Rea-side till the spring following—is indented with a memorable mark, the death of George Washington, 'to whom,' says Lord Mahon, 'was offered the unanimous homage of the assembled Congress—all clad in deep mourning for their common loss—as to the first man in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow citizens.' The *Justiciam* of the old Romans could not have been more solemn or imposing; such as the classical reader will read of in Lucan's 'Pharsalia':—

> Ergo ubi concipiunt quantis sit cladibus Urbi
> Constatura fides superûm, ferale per urbem
> Justitium: latuit plebeio tectus amictu
> Omnis honos: nullos comitata est purpura fasces.

On January 1, 1800, George III. began a letter to the Bishop of Worcester with these kindly words: 'The entering on a new century is so natural an occasion of writing to one whom I so thoroughly love, that I cannot refrain from putting my pen to paper, though at the risk of breaking in upon your retirement.' The letter is dated Windsor.

It is in this same letter that he speaks of the impudent overthrow of the monstrous French Republic by a Corsican adventurer, and his creating himself to be law-giver and executor of his own decree, according, of course, to his seizure of the Government as First Consul, in the December preceding. It was with reference to this that Rickman wrote to Southey, saying, 'How do you and Buonaparte agree at present? I never believed the Corsican, and now he has given all new offence by his absurd misnomers, which go to confound all the fixed ideas of consuls, tribune, and senate.' The reply of Southey shows that his hopes in the French Revolution were gone. 'Once I had hopes,' are his words, 'but Buonaparte has made me anti-Gallican.'

Meanwhile there was much anxiety at home, and coming scarcity was felt severely, and thoughtful men, like the good Wilberforce, were considering what could be done, whilst many were saying:—

> In vain doth valour bleed
> Where Avarice and Rapine share the land.

The truth is, that many believed that the regraters, forestallers, and engrossers were making a great market out of hungry people, and that there were granaries in the country full to overflowing. There is no doubt, however, but that the harvest of the last year was a bad one. Madame d'Arblay makes allusion to it in her Diary. In the manufacturing districts there was an undercurrent of discontent which was soon to reach the surface, wild as a tenth wave—

Vastíus insurgens decimæ ruit impetus undæ.

February is not always 'February fill-ditch,' as old Tusser calls it, and in this year, my Talking Friend told me, there were some beautiful and borrowed days, though they were succeeded by wild and weird gusts from Habberley Hole, that stormy point so often mentioned in these pages. It was on the fine days of the month now alluded to that my old chronicler said the greatest flocks of starlings he had ever seen visited and re-visited the valley of the Rea, and they delighted to drop in the meadow through which the little rivulet passed, and by which his time-honoured father stood so many and long a year. It is pretty at all times to see these birds come trooping, and the author of these lines must have watched them :—

It sounded like some February mead,
Where thick the lustred starlings creep and feed,
And each his own song sings unto his mate,
Chiding the fickle spring so cold and late.

On April 20, this year, there died a man of many woes and mental troubles—William Cowper, the poet—and his name is mentioned here because he was the favourite poet of the lady of 'THE LAST OF THE OLD SQUIRES,' who adorned by all Christian virtues the old homestead of Meole, when she came there from Hanwood on her marriage. Some of his small poems are amongst the earliest I can call to mind, especially 'The rose had been washed, just washed in a shower,' and 'My Mary.' Who ever forgets lines that have been repeated to him by his mother? And, besides this, as Browne so touchingly says in his Pastorals :—

> For there is hidden in a poet's name
> A spell that can command the wings of fame
> And maugre all Oblivion's hated birth,
> Begin their immortalitie on earth.

It was on his death that the venerable Newton wrote to Hannah More, saying, 'My most dear and intimate friend, William Cowper, has obtained a release from all his distresses. I preached a funeral sermon for him on the 11th instant from Eccles. ii. 2, 3. Why was he, who both by talents and disposition seemed qualified, if it were possible, to reform the age in which he lived, harassed by distresses and despair, so that the bush which Moses saw all in flames was a fit emblem of his case?' And he presently adds, with much Christian thoughtfulness, 'a slight alteration in the nervous system would make us a burden and a terror to ourselves and our friends. It may likewise reconcile us to lighter troubles when we see what the Lord's most favoured and honoured servants are appointed to endure. But we are sure that He is rich enough, and that eternity is long enough, to make them abundant amends for whatever His infinite wisdom may seem meet to call them to, for promoting His glory in the end. For this bush, though so long in flames, was not consumed, because the Lord was there. The last twelve hours of his life he lay still, and took no notice; but as long as he could speak, there was no proof that his derangement was either removed or abated. But he was free from his great terrors. There was no sign either of joy or sorrow when near his departure. What a glorious surprise must it be to find himself released from all his chains in a moment, and in the presence of the Lord, whom he loved, and whom he served; for, as the Apostle says, "When absent from the body, present with the Lord." There is no intermediate state. How little does he think now of all that he suffered while here!'

On July 2 the Act for the Union with Ireland, notwithstanding the opposition of Fox, Sheridan, Grey, and Tierney, passed the British Parliament, but it was not till January 1, 1801, that the Imperial banner floated to the wind over Dublin Castle. The rector of Hanwood told the news to the 'LAST OF THE OLD SQUIRES' as they were passing the Red

Barn, just opposite to Edgebolt—a well-known spot on the way from Shrewsbury, where some unfortunate man had hung himself—

> Whose very name men now have clean forgot,
> But, as folk think, ill spirits haunt the spot.

In the days of our boyhood our old familiar groom, Richard Glover, used to tell us the tale with an ominous shake of the head. It was amongst his

> Remembrances and dim admonishments.

My Talking Friend informed me that the harvest was again a poor one, and that men's minds were restless, as they were last year; though at Meole there was no cause for complaint, for old Henry Warter of the Upper House still pursued his old custom, and his men and their households had their grist at the old prices. The miller's thumb had the only profits!

> There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
> Would men observingly distil it out.

'A scanty harvest,' writes Wilberforce, 'has increased the general discontent,' and the good man was using all his powers, as he always did, to improve the state of the people. His queries on this point, issued in 1796, are as valuable as his words to Lord Muncaster this year are remarkable. The people compare our situation to that of a ship on short allowances; for the officers are at short allowance too, and not the men only.' The matter is referred to again here, because the evil seemed increasing. It was at this time that so many country gentlemen stood forth nobly, and did their duties by living amongst their own people and looking to their necessities. Such landholders are a blessing to any land—men who know well that

> fearful commenting
> Is leaden servitor to dull delay.

Toward the end of this year my Talking Friend told me that he missed on the road an old man he had known for years, named Edward Burgoise, Burgoyne, or Burgwyn. From what I could pick out, he was a man whose latter days rebuked his early ones. Originally from the Longmynd, he

had passed and repassed between Shelve and Shrewsbury for years, and settled latterly at Hanwood, where he died and was buried. No one knew more about the divining-rod, lead, and the lead-mines, which in his early years he believed to be tenanted by spirits, and would have said :—

> Tis not vain or false love
> (Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance),
> What the sage poets, taught by th' heavenly Muse,
> Story'd of old in high immortal verse,
> Of dim chimæras and inchanted isles,
> And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell;
> For such these be, but unbelief is blind.

In fact, at this time, 'Georgii Agricolæ de Re Metallica libri XII.' did not contain more queer notions than Edward Burgwyn's mind did; but in his latter days he found that he had been entertaining '*superstitious vanities*,' and, as it were, '*stones of emptiness*,' and would have said in these words of 'Saint Peter's Complaint':—

> Christ! health of favour'd soul, heaven of the mind,
> Force of the feeble, nurse of infant loves,
> Guide to the wandering feet, light to the blind,
> Whom weeping wives repentant sorrow moves;
> Father in care, mother in tender heart,
> Revive and save me, slack with sinful darts.

I tried to pick out something more of the old man's history, but my Talking Friend did not seem to know any further particulars. All that he added was that he was one of the many curious people he had known in his time; and thus it often happened, when I thought my dear old chronicler was about to recount something worth writing down, he would stop suddenly, shake his leaves, and become mute as a fish in the stream close by! And I could only say with the old playwright: 'You shall close it up like treasure of your own, and you yourself shall keep the key of it.'

Notwithstanding that the wheat-crop was short, there was a great quantity of oak and beech mast this year, and the swine, as in old days of Domesday and pannage, were driven to the woods; and had they not been taken, thither they would have gone, for the nose of a pig is as keen to sniff the

acorns from afar as is the instinctive nose of an old cock-pheasant. The consequence was that the 'salt-room' half-way up the old chimney at Meole was fitted with the finest bacon. King John had none finer when he ordered to be hung up and salted '*bacones nostros qui sunt apud Turrim.*'

The only other point that I can call to mind is my Talking Friend's telling me that the finest alders on the stream were this year cut down to repair the different weirs and embankments on the stream. It would appear that the alder had been used from time immemorial for under-water work. The 'Kaia-Regis' of the Tower probably dates from the time of Henry III., and 'John de Crumbwell, Custos, 8-9 Edward III., had then an order for 300 alder poles from Windsor Forest for repairing it.' Such are the little 'scrips and scraps' of old times!

'Its timber,' says the annotator to Evelyn, 'is very valuable for works intended to lie constantly under water, where it will harden and last for ages. It is said to have been used under the Rialto at Venice; and we are told by Vitruvius that the morasses about Ravenna were piled with this timber, in order to lay the foundation for building upon.'

Of all unpleasant things to get a fly into when fishing on the Rea-side is the dried catkin of the alder, *experto crede*. One perfectly shudders at the mention of 'carr' in Norfolk, by which are meant 'plantations of alders, willows,' &c., the bane of fisher-folk.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE NEW CENTURY.

OLD FULLER, speaking of Archbishop Laud's earlier days as President of St. John's College, Oxford, and Bishop of St. David's says: 'As the matter whereof china dishes are made must lie some ages in the earth before it is ripened to perfection, so great persons are not fit for an historical use to write freely of them till some years after their decease, when the memories can neither be marred nor mended with flattery' —a remark this which may be well applied to the memory of George III., no common man in the line of English kings.

Having arrived at the year 1801, I asked my Talking Friend what he was chiefly impressed with at the commencement of a new century—for it was his idea that the century commenced in 1801; and although many thought it commenced in 1800 he never altered his opinion. In truth, his oakship was not one to alter his views, and even now, after all astronomical additions, and all the insight into space of a Newton, a Waring, a Herschel, or an Adams, he would have said with the utmost serenity and complacency:—

> No pedagogue we need, for surely heaven
> Lies spread above us, with the planets seven
> To teach us all its lore!

Looking back to the century passed the Old Oak said there was a visible and progressive improvement in agriculture, horticulture, and in the manners of the people; although in large towns, and in the metropolis of the land especially, the back wave of the French Revolution had thrown up much scepticism—a subject this which created many misgivings in the land; and with his intensely conservative views, no doubt my Talking Friend would have said that the atheistical fool

was the greatest of all fools, and possibly have called to his keen recollection the words of the old ballad :—

> This fool is worthy of the bauble and the bell,
> For of all other fools he doth excell ;
> And as the proverbe dothe shew very playne,
> A hood for his back to keep him from the cayne.

From time immemorial strong ale has been the Shropshire countryman's darling, but yet, said my Talking Friend, stupid, boozy drunkenness began to diminish with the century, though there is plenty of it yet, and though the publics are beset as each Saturday night comes round. And he again referred to some old doggerel lines which he had heard old people say were to be found at many publics called 'The Fox' throughout the land.

I recollect no lines about 'The Fox' at Albrighton, but there was always good ale and bread and cheese there for Shrewsbury boys, and a hearty welcome from the worthy Boniface of those days. Perhaps the lines following were those alluded to by the Old Oak, and in my Oxford days they were to be seen at Steventon in Berkshire :—

> I am a Fox, you plainly see,
> No harm you can derive from me ;
> My master he confines me here,
> Because I knows he sells good beer.

The year opened with great distress, and the price of corn was light. It was felt throughout the valley, but most in the manufacturing districts. It was at this time that the benevolent Wilberforce came forth with his customary open-heartedness, and did even more than it lay in his power to do, being a man rooted and grounded in charity.

Meanwhile a matter began to be mooted which much interested the old county of Shropshire, and disturbed the minds of many who dwelt on the banks of the Rea—the question, I mean, of Catholic Emancipation—and an old Indian who lived not far off said it reminded him of the Arabian apologue of the camel and the tent on a cold night, and that it was but getting in the thin end of the wedge which would cleave and rend the constitution, and, not im-

probably, undermine the Crown. Even the liberal Walpole's views could not be more strong than were those of this worthy old soldier, who had eaten much fire and killed many tigers in India. I remember him well, and his sowing for my saintly mother the first white foxgloves in the garden at Meole. He was not a man of the 'crowe's pyping' sort, but ready always for the battle; and yet, when undisturbed, as soft and tender as the south wind on a summer's eve.

Please one, and please all,
Be they great, be they small,
Be they little, be they lowe,
So pypett the crowe.
Sitting upon a walle,
Please one, and please all,
Please one, and please all.

But if the Roman Catholic question disturbed private individuals, it sadly harassed the mind of the good King, nor was he one to get over the deep sense of his coronation oath, who was said to have retorted quickly, 'None of your Scotch metaphysics, Mr. Dundas!' It was to his equerry General Garth that he opened all his mind upon the subject, having first commanded him to read it out. When he had finished it, he exclaimed excitedly:—

'Where is that power on earth to absolve me from the due observance of every sentence of that oath, particularly the one requiring me to maintain the Protestant reformed religion? Was not my family seated on the throne for that express purpose, and shall I be the first to suffer it to be undermined, perhaps overturned? No! I had rather beg my bread from door to door throughout Europe than consent to any such measure.' These words of his late revered royal master, General Garth said he was 'ready to attest if called upon;' adding that in his private opinion 'they ought to be written in letters of gold.' On another occasion, after having read his coronation oath to his family, and inquired of them if they understood it, the King exclaimed, 'If I violate it, I am no longer legal sovereign of this country, but it falls to the House of Savoy.' So earnest was George III.

'Sorrow doth ill become thy silver brow!

But, clearly, his mind became unhinged again ; and that the question of Catholic Emancipation was the turning-point is clear when he said, feeling a little better, 'I am better now, *but I will remain true to the Church.*' It is now well known that from February 22 till March 2 he was not himself ; then, happily, the malady subsided for the present ; but it was only dormant, for he was for weeks afterwards in retirement at Kew, and required the most cautious management.

It was this question that brought about Pitt's resignation, but none in the old county, or on the Rea-side, looked upon the Addington administration as anything. It will be enough to say here that Pitt's farewell interview with the King took place on March 14, and the ministerial appointments were gazetted on the 17th. The anecdote which Lord Eldon tells points evidently to the unsettled state of the King's mind at this time. More than thirty years afterwards he said to Mrs. Forster, 'I do not know what made George III. so fond of me ; but he *was* fond of me. Did I ever tell you the manner in which he gave me the seals ? When I went to him he had his coat buttoned thus (one or two buttons fastened at the lower part), and putting his right hand within, he drew them out from the left side, saying, "I give them to you *from my heart.*" ' There can be no doubt whatever of the King's hearty feeling for Lord Eldon, but such familiarity was contrary to his custom.

Owing to the high price of wheat at this time the 'HARVEST HOMES' in the valley, and as far as the Gordyr, the Marsh, and Caux Castle, seem to have been kept with unusual festivities, and indeed a sort of saturnalia was the result. My Talking Friend called my attention to this subject, and mentioned many curious customs now passed away. As I am writing for old Shropshire boys and for Shropshire people especially, I may venture to mention the two remnants of 'Auld Lang Syne' which came under my own notice in my boyhood, noting by the way that the bunch of ears of corn which even to this day we see on the head of every stack is probably the last remnant of the Pagan image of Ceres, except the one presently to be mentioned. It was the same

in Italy, when the treading of the grape was over, and the grape-treaders shouted for joy :—

Oscilla ex alta suspendunt mollia pinu.

I had heard my Talking Friend talk of a 'DOLL' made up of a sheaf and ears of corn, and of the 'HOCK-CART,' which the reapers and other labourers, and a vast concourse of women and children gleaners, accompanied home to the farmer's house with great rejoicing and shoutings. This 'DOLL' was evidently the old image of Ceres, all about which, when at Wolverhampton in my early years, I heard well from an old countrywoman who washed and charred at the Rev. William Tindale's, then head-master of the Free Grammar School, a gentleman every inch, and a determined hater of all Jacobites, and a passionate lover of William Pitt, and the staunchest member of the Pitt Club, then held at the 'Swan Inn.'

This old woman never ceased to lament that Harvest Homes were going out, and with them 'Thanksgivings for the Harvest,' which we are now reviving, and which must not be attended with too much 'mummery,' or the idea will arise that we are again falling into Papistic customs. It was with sparkling eyes—for she had no dislike to the barleycorn too—that the old soul spoke of four girls in far lands which preceded the hock-cart, and of the reapers which followed, and how the master came forth from the stack-yard to greet them, and to call them in for the 'hockey-cake,' which, as a whet, preceded the harvest supper and the harvest goose. And she would add, 'Those were good and thankful times, when I lived with old Mr. Woods on the other side of Tettenhall, and all the children on the estate had their fill of Tettenhall girderpies, and new ribbands in their little straw bonnets, and were happy as innocence could make them!' If my memory serves me the old woman's name was Hand.

What relates to the hock-cart may be found in Herrick's 'Hesperides'; only the reader must recollect by the way that the hock-tide, which followed Easter, has nothing to do with harvesting, though it has with seed-time. The Hock Tuesday Play was a Coventry mystery.

And thus much of the modern feast of Ceres, and the hock-cart, and worthy old Dame Hand of Wolverhampton, of whose chronicle it may be said :

> 'Tis no sinister, nor no awkward claim,
> Pick'd from the worm-holes of long vanish'd days,
> Nor from the dust of old oblivion rak'd.

The only other curious custom which I can recollect myself was 'The crying of the Mare,' well known to my Talking Friend. It was not, however, by the old homestead at Meole that we heard it, but at the Marsh, the residence of a kind uncle, John Clavering Wood, the son of old Colonel Wood of Hanwood, our mother's father.

My recollections of the custom are clear enough, but the particulars have escaped me ; what I remember is a large concourse of people, great noise and shouting, a single cart and a single horse, and the constant repetition of 'The mare! the mare! I have her! I have her!' All accompanied the cart home, and at night was the harvest supper. On the present occasion 'the mare' was a literal fact, for it was old Mr. Lloyd's mare that drew the cart, which was surrounded by his men. He loved a cup of good ale himself, and took care that they should have one too. Such was the ancient custom, and, as Thomson says :—

> Thus they rejoice, nor think
> That, with to-morrow's sun, their annual toil
> Begins again the never-ceasing round.

The reader may find many accounts of 'Crying the Mare.' The following is from Blount's 'Glossographia,' as quoted by Halliwell : 'To cry the mare is an ancient custom in Herefordshire ; viz. when each husbandman is reaping the last of his corn, the workmen leave a few blades standing, and tye the tops of them together, *which is the mare*, and then stand at a distance and throw their sickles at it, and he that cuts the knot has the prize ; which done, they cry with a loud voice, "I have her ! I have her ! I have her !" Others answer, "What have you ? what have you ? what have you ?" "A mare ! a mare ! a mare !" "Whose is she ? whose is she ? whose is she ?" J. B. (naming the owner three times). "Whither will

you send her? To Joshua Nokes" (naming some neighbour who had not all his corn reaped). Then they all shout three times, and so the ceremony ends with good cheer. In Yorkshire upon like occasions they have a Harvest Dance; in Bedfordshire a Jack and a Gill.'

The 'Frolick' and the 'Largess' are names not common with us, but in Norfolk I have heard of both, and have been present at the 'Frolluck,' as they commonly call the harvest revel; and I called to mind the words of old Tusser in his 'August's Husbandry':—

> Grant, harvest-lord, more, by a penny or two,
> To call on his fellows the better to do:
> Give gloves to thy reapers, a largess to cry,
> And daily to lotteries have a good eye.

Walter White, in his 'Eastern England,' explains it at length, referring to Bloomfield and the old 'Horkey.'

And the Old Oak said he delighted in 'Harvest Homes' and the 'Christmas Tide,' for the people, if under-educated, were happy, and the masters in the valley were mostly just ones. And as an old man passed by, named William Overston, or 'Old William,' as he was usually called at the homestead, he pointed him out as an instance of entire contentment. I knew him well, the poor good man.

The only other point connected with the year which my Talking Friend referred to was the short-lived peace, the preliminaries of which were signed by Lord Hawkesworth and Mr. Otto on October 1. Pitt thought it 'highly honourable and advantageous, though, in one material respect, differing from what might have been wished.' But, statesman as he was, he was deceived in his hopes, though it could not be said of him—

> Heaven's best aim is wasted upon men
> Who to themselves are false;

for he was a truthful man, and a great lover of his country. May it not be said of many years, in the words of the Yoruban proverb, 'The wisdom of this year will be as folly in another'?

And thus we have arrived at the year 1802—and it was a

dear time, and it cannot be said that the people were at rest or contented.

It chanced on a day—it was a bright summer's day—that as I sat beneath the venerable tree, a Savoyard minstrel boy passed by, with a diminutive barrel-organ, which he played with delight, and then showed me his pretty white mice, adding with an arch smile, 'Donnez-moi du pain pour mon petit cher loir, qui dort tout l'hiver,' making out his mice to be dormice, though I think they were not.

And there was a rustling in the Old Oak's branches, and I knew that he had something oracular at his leaves' ends. And thus he began :—

'It is but thirty years or so back since these wandering boys were first seen in these parts, and welcomed by all our people ; for you know that all villagers love music, whether on the green, or at the water, or at church, or Whitsun-ales. As old Challoner, the sailor, said at the "Cock" at Hanwood, "We are as fond of music as the seal is."' To which he added, 'The wandering and whistling Wyllys were the predecessors of the village fiddlers and the Savoyard boys.'

I had noticed many times that my Talking Friend mentioned all wandering minstrels with a sort of respect and regard, and he said that early in the present century a well-known 'Wandering Willy,' who whistled marvellously, constantly passed and repassed this way, and that his round appeared to be between Shrewsbury and Montgomery, one of his particular haunts being at Mrs. Windsor's, at Westbury, a remarkable old lady, who kept the well-known inn there, and was well versed in the use of cocculus indicus, which, as a drug, preceded strychnine. She was the old worthy who made the following reply to an equally well-known and kind-hearted magistrate half a century ago : 'I am told, Mrs. Windsor,' said he, in most magisterial tone, 'that you are accused of drugging your drink.' To which she replied in a by no means submissive tone, '*Yoh'dn* better drink a pint, and then *yoh'll* find out.' Drugged or not, it never hurt poor Wandering Willy, and he was always a welcome guest.

As late as 1812 I quite well recollect a 'Wandering

Whistling Willy,' evidently weak in his mind, but whose bird-like notes I can never forget, nor yet his grisly, red, long, ragged hair. But is 'Willy' a real name? Till this year 1867 I always thought so; but in the curious old poem of 'Clearness,' published by the Early English Text Society, I chanced upon this line and note, which causes a doubt:—

> More to wyte is her wrange, than any wylle gentyl.
> *I.e.* More to blame is that fault, than any forlorn gentile.

On which is given the note following: 'Wylle has the signification of wandering astray; as "*wyl dremes*," wandering dreams; "*wylle of wone*," astray from human habitations, having lost one's way; and hence "wylle" is often used to denote uncertainty, bewilderment.'

All times have had their Minstrels and their Wandering Willys, from that blind bard's time downward to ours, who

> with inward light
> Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssee
> Rise to the swelling of the tuneful sea.

Another very remarkable man—the last of his class, and whom I very well remember in childhood—lived also in these days; and my Talking Friend said, 'I could hear him wind his horn half-way up from Hanwood, and long before he reached Cross his *tara-tara, taratantara!*'

The person here alluded to was old John Lewis, the horse and cow doctor, and, as he was also called, the sow gelder. He used to ride furiously between ford and ford, blowing his horn (often alluded to in our old dramatists) with all his might, leaving behind him an unmistakable smell of caraways and aniseed—

> Mansit odor: posses scire fuisse——

He was the terror of all little boys on the road—being essentially a wag, or, as our forefathers called such a person, 'a mad devil'—and told them, when inquisitive, that he always carried little children's heads in his leathern bag, using besides unutterable threats against them if they were

saucy to him. This worthy—my recollection of him goes back as far as 1812—in all his peculiar characteristics, was probably the last of his race, and his twisted cow's horn was of unwonted size. No lamb or goat ever died under his hands, and if cow or calf were *hoven*, he, best of all, knew where to strike, and to relieve the suffering beast.

It was currently reported on the Rea-side that John Lewis had done what no other man ever did, for he is said to have cut a man open, to have untwisted a gut, to have sewn him up again, and he recovered and lived—a totally different operation from that for strangulated hernia. I have heard that it has been done in India, and with success; but it is usually fatal. The operation which comes nearest to it with us is that for ovarian dropsy; but it is performed under chloroform, and with only partial success.

Speaking of the different signs of the Horn, the authors of the 'History of Signboards' remark: 'It was also the sign and badge of the cattle doctor and village gelder, and came to be exhibited as such either from its use in drenching animals, or from the fact of such an instrument being blown by the doctor'—our John Lewis—'to give notice to the village of his approach. At Messingham, Lincoln, the Horn Inn, a century ago, was kept by such a personage. Further on this professional is mentioned in connection with Tom of Bedlam.'

And so much for the redoubtable John Lewis, whom my Talking Friend knew so well, and whose horn he heard so often; and though some said

> He talks at random, since the man is mad,

he was nevertheless a very useful and clever man in his generation.

On March 25 this year the Treaty of Peace was signed at Amiens, but, as noted in a previous page, it was of short continuance. Buonaparte's ambition looked to nothing less than the ruin and subjugation of England, and, in this peace, he only sought for breathing time. And yet Wordsworth's sonnet, written in August this year, and at Calais, showed

how Englishmen of all sorts, himself amongst them, hastened to see the new Consul :—

> Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind?
> Or what is it that you go forth to see?
> Lords, lawyers, statesmen, squires of low degree,
> Men known, and men unknown, sick, lame, and blind,
> Post forward all, like creatures of one kind,
> With first-fruit offerings crowd to bend the knee
> In France, before the new-born majesty.
> 'Tis ever thus. Ye men of prostrate mind!
> A seemly reverence may be paid to power!
> But that's a loyal virtue, never sown
> In haste, nor springing with a transient shower:
> When truth, when sense, when liberty were flown,
> What hardship had it been to wait an hour?
> Shame on ye, feeble heads to slavery prone!

In April this year died one well known throughout the whole county, though not of the county—Lord Kenyon, the Lord Chief Justice of England—usually designated 'Taffy' by bluff old Thurlow, and greatly beloved by Lord Eldon, who told his son, 'If ever I write your father's epitaph, I should describe him—"Justissimus unus, et servantissimus æqui."' His seat was at Gredington, in the parish of Hanmer, Flintshire, and hence his Welsh designation by the ex-Chancellor, who, like Lord Eldon, could well appreciate his worth. Wilberforce's Diary, under April 10, has this entry, 'Poor Lord Kenyon died, and Mr. Law succeeding him.' Many knew him personally in the valley of the Rea, and liked to see him at the Shrewsbury Assizes, and there were some people in Hanwood and Pontesbury who had worked on Gredington Hall. One he was, with reference to whom Wordsworth would have said :—

> There is
> One great society alone on earth
> The noble living and the noble dead!

Meanwhile, in the valley, all the people talked of Buonaparte, and the reader may like to see what Madame d'Arblay thought, who saw him early this year in Paris. 'I had a view so near, though so brief, of his face, as to be very much struck by it. It is of a deeply impressive cast, pale even to sallowness, while not only in the eye, but in every feature,

care, thought, melancholy, and meditation are strongly marked, with so much of character—nay, genius—and so penetrating a seriousness, or rather sadness, as powerfully to sink into the observer's mind.' Later in the year Miss Edgeworth visited Paris—it was some time in the autumn—and the reader may see some very interesting matters in the 'Memoir of Maria Edgeworth,' recently printed, and, it is hoped, to be published before long. As for Buonaparte himself, as the year advanced, his designs became more and more evident; and Addington, the *locum tenens* of Pitt, even throughout the valley of the Rea, and in the old town, was not thought equal to the occasion; and, indeed, within a little while, the force of Sir Philip Sidney's lines in the 'Arcadia' were generally felt, even by those who so earnestly wished for the peace:—

> Fear is more pain than is the pain it bears,
> Disarming human minds of native might,
> While each conceit an ugly figure bears,
> Which were not evil, viewed in reason's light.

In September this year old Isaac Probert the wheelwright, a clever man at his trade, then earning 2*s.* a day, had been to do some work in Shrewsbury, where he remained a week. On his return he told his neighbours at the 'Cock,' on Saturday night, that he had seen a wonderful fish taken below the castle—quite a monster for size. And what the old man said was true enough. It was a sturgeon, weighing 192 lbs., 6 feet 6 inches long, and 3 feet 4 inches in girth. In my Shrewsbury days it was the wonder of all the boys at the schools.

In former days the sturgeon was considered a royal fish, when taken in the Thames, and within the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayors, and Yarrell adds that 'the sturgeon was exclusively reserved for the table of Henry the First of England.' Dear old Butler took care that all Shrewsbury boys in the upper classes should remember the lines of Juvenal:—

> Quicquid conspicuum pulchrumque ex æquore toto est,
> Res fisci est, ubicunque natat: donabitur ergo,
> Ne pereat.

There was another old man who lived at Hanwood in

those days, or a little before, whose name my Talking Friend did not mention, nor can I call to mind anyone who responded to the character in my early days, though I remember poor old Isaac Probert well, rubbing his blue nails on a winter's morning, the icicle hanging at his nose.

The other ancient worthy here alluded to had led a troublesome life in his early days, for his wife was a shrew and a scold, and old Edward Matthews, the cider-grower of Little Malvern Common, who made periodical visits in the neighbourhood, used to say that never woman deserved so well 'The Brank,' or 'Scold's Bridle,' which appears to have been a common punishment in Worcestershire, as there are entries in the Worcester town accounts about 'mending the Scould's bridle and cords for the same.'

All that my Old Friend added of this patient man was that he was of most industrious habits, and that he survived his wife many years. She, it appears, was, in her cottage, a pattern of neatness, and, as long as he lived, the cottage was the same, for on every Saturday night the clean brick-floor was fresh sanded and dressed with juniper, savin, or cut rushes. 'He was a very notable man,' continued my ancient chronicler, 'with little ruddy, frost-bitten cheeks, as red as a red-streak apple.' The patience of the old man, after all constituted his happiness, and the lines of Stephen Hawes in his 'Pastime of Plesure' are of wide acceptation :—

> Who is opprest with a little wrong,
> Revenging it, he may it sone increase ;
> Far better it is for to suffer a-long
> An injury, as for to keep the peace,
> Than to begin, which he shall never cease.
> Warre once begun, it is harde to knowe,
> Who shall abide, and who shall overthrowe.

The year 1803 commenced with great misgivings, and the old homestead at Meole had cause to know it, for the 'Last of the old Squires,' as he was afterwards called, was absent with his regiment in Liverpool and Chester, a great miss to the people, by whom he was much beloved. He was captain of the Shropshire Grenadiers—a remarkably fine body of men, though not trained to the use of the *grenade*, against

which the late Sir Jasper Nicholls gave an unfavourable opinion.

Meanwhile, England was up in arms, though the 'experimental peace of Amiens,' as George III. called it, continued. And, in truth, he was right in the name he called it by; for, at least, Buonaparte had no thought of peace, but only wanted breathing time, as he had come to the conclusion in his own mind that Great Britain—the very name was as gravel in his mouth—could not contend alone against France and his armies, and himself at the head of them. But he never did, and never could, realise the thorough and dogged determination of John Bull when roused, or understand his deep patriotism.

Oddly enough, the name of Colonel Edward Marcus Despard was at this time one mooted in the valley, and it was so because he was an Irishman, and born in Queen's County, where Murphy, the servant of the captain just mentioned, was born also. No doubt, as Superintendent of Honduras, and in the Spanish main, he had been a good soldier, and Lord Nelson bore testimony to his worth. But, somehow or other, the Government did not uphold him, and he became disaffected, and was supposed to have plotted the death of his sovereign as he proceeded to open Parliament. Nobody could induce Murphy to think so, and the extract following from a letter of Southey's to Rickman, dated Bristol, Feb. 20, bears him out: 'I shall like to know what you think of Despard and the conspiracy. Wynn, who was at the trial, thought it had deeper roots than were discovered, and that the accomplices were many. The evidence rather made me imagine that Despard had been amusing himself with talking treason, of planning what might be treasonable castle-building—that he had been playing with a halter till he was caught in the noose. I could have found him guilty as a fool, not as a traitor.' Whichever he was, he was shortly after executed.

It was about the Easter-tide, when I chanced to be passing beneath his boughs, that my Talking Friend asked me 'if I knew anything about the Easter Pence which had to be paid throughout the valley?' and then added, 'Edward

Jones the jockey, who has just run up a bit of a cottage by the Hanwood foot-bridge, on a waste piece of ground, says he shall pay no *fire pence*, for in every flood his fire would be washed out, and, perhaps, his cottage washed away, after all his labour and toil.' Edward the jockey was a wag, and loved beer and tobacco—which he chewed—and never had any thought of paying 'fire pence,' as he called the gabel. And so his bit of ground continued to be 'non geldabilis,' as Domesday would have expressed it, and he was chief lord, and no under-tenant.

I bore what my Talking Friend said in mind, and very recently, in examining some old account-books of the homestead at Meole, I fell upon the following, headed

'PARISH OF PONTESBURY.'

'There is due at the Feast of Easter yearly for offerings for every housekeeper, and his wife, and every child, servant, sojourner, or other person of the family, of the age of seventeen years, the sum of twopence, according to the custom of the said parish.

'There is due yearly from every housekeeper, at the Feast of Easter, one penny, commonly called a smoke-penny, in lieu of the tythe of wood burnt in the house, and one penny, called a garden-penny, in lieu of a store of bees, except when the same is sent to Ford.

'JOHN HARRIES
'SAMUEL PHILLIPS } *Churchwardens.*

'*June* 27, 1746.'

Old Edward Jones' wood was not hard to find, and he naturally ignored smoke-pennies, and hearth-pennies, and garden-pennies, and honey-pennies. 'Words are like to money, the most current always the best,' said William Sheridan, Bishop of Kilmore and Ardagh; and so thought the jockey by the Rea-side. What was a custom in days gone by, was not his custom.

The hearth-penny has been alluded to before in these pages, but here it literally came home to the valley. Every

fire-man, such as were the 'cotsetler' and 'corcet' of the Wiltshire Domesday, were obliged to pay it on Holy Thursday, and it is constantly mentioned.

Count Gondomar remarked, 'La harina de Inglatierra es muy delgada y fina, pero el afrecho es muy grosero,' i.e. the flour (meaning the gentry) was very choice and fine, but the bran (the common people) was very coarse. Edward Jones of Hanwood was of the 'bran'; but an excellent jockey for all that, and one who would have said of himself, had he belonged to the Della Crusca :—

Il più bel fior ne coglie.

He was another of the odd characters of the valley, of which few are to be found now—so cleverly dull and stupid are we all become; though, perhaps, 'I had better have plucked a nettle with my naked hand' than have said so; and I hear some Benvolio saying, 'But, an I be not revenged for this, would I might be turned to a gaping oyster, and drink nothing else but salt water!'

As before hinted, it was clear that peace was not to be of long continuance, and hardly were we well up May-hill,

The sweet season that bud and bloom forth brings,

when negotiations between France and Great Britain came virtually to an end; for on the 16th of May Lord Whitworth, the British Ambassador, was ordered to quit Paris—a worthy peer, whose excellent example, and that of the Duchess of Dorset, on the due observance of the Sunday in those days at Paris, is mentioned in a letter of Bishop Porteus to Hannah More with high satisfaction.

Upon his recall followed immediately an Order in Council directing reprisals against the goods and subjects of France, and a proclamation declaring an embargo on all French ships in British ports; and then the memorable debates in the House of Commons on peace and war, in which Pitt and Fox delivered those celebrated speeches which a few old Westminsters, using their privilege, still remember. Pitt's was spoken on May 23, Fox's on May 24; and it was Fox who

said of Pitt's that had Demosthenes been present 'he must have admired, and might have envied.'

> Mota manus procerum est; et quid facundia posset,
> Re patuit.

War did not actually commence, but there was war in the gate.

'Towards the end of July'—it was July 30—said my Talking Friend, 'there was nothing but talk of war throughout our, at other times, peaceful valley; many even doubted our wooden walls and heart of oak, and thought our seaboard was not to be depended upon; and whilst these matters were mooted, who should pass through Shrewsbury, on his way to Liverpool, but Prince William of Gloucester, the first royal prince who had been there since the Revolution; and so,' added my venerable chronicler, 'all the people from Minsterley and Pontesbury, Cruckton, Cruck Meole, and Hanwood went trooping, like starlings in November, to meet him, and to see the gala sight.' And the Old Oak was quite right in what he said, for the 'Last of the old Squires' was then with his regiment in Liverpool, and heard the Mayor make his very hospitable, but not very elegant, speech about the turtle: 'Fill your royal belly, your royal highness; there's plenty more in the kitchen!'

Although it was six months, at least, in reaching the valley, it was on September 23 this year that Arthur Wellesley (afterwards the Iron Duke) defeated Scindiah and the Rajah of Berar at Assaye, his first great battle. When the news came to Hanwood in the early part of the next year, Colonel Wood, who had not been in the parish since 1792, was in a state of great excitement, and although a careful man in money matters, and no encourager of idle vagrants, it is currently reported that he gave 'Tom Pudding' no less than sixpence at once. It was some years later that the 'Last of the old Squires,' one day on his return from Shrewsbury with his regimentals on, offered him a shilling, which he declined, with his ugly monkeyish leer, saying, 'No, no! I'm not going to 'list!' He lived till the fourpenny-bits came out—half knave, half mischievous fool, with a dash of the

idiot in him—and on being offered one by my father, whose pensioner he continued to be to the last, twice turned it over in his grimy, bony hand, saying, 'This be a little beggar!' expecting his usual sixpence.

He was an exceedingly ugly fellow this old Tom Pudding.

At the Upper House in those days, where good old Henry Warter lived, and sold out his bread to the poor, were some curious old cut yew-trees, with whom my Talking Friend—for he loved all that was ancient—was on the best of terms. Under their quaint shadow this worthy 'Tom Pudding' always sat, and never thought of moving till his wants were relieved. Few such yew-trees remain nowadays; but here they are still, the admiration of all strangers who pass by, summoning up many bygone associations; for, as Thomas Warton expressed himself in and on Dugdale's 'Monasticon,'

> Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
> Of hoar antiquity, but strewn with flowers.

It was at this time that the volunteer and yeomanry corps were gathered together, to the number of 380,000 men, it is said; and Pitt himself, as Warden of the Cinque Ports, put himself at the head of 3,000. Talking of them to Mrs. Forster, in his after-life, Lord Eldon said, 'We had a meeting of the ministers, at the time of the French threat of invasion, to consider the propriety of allowing of volunteer regiments; and the ministers showed that they were afraid of incurring such an expense. When I had to give my opinion, I said, "Do as you please; but if these men do not volunteer for you, they will against you." The volunteers saved the country: Buonaparte acknowledged it. I think the finest sight I ever beheld was the great review in Hyde Park before the King, George the Third. The King, in passing, addressed Tom Erskine, who was colonel, asking him the name of his corps. He answered, the "Devil's Own." The Lincoln's Inn volunteers went by the name of the "Devil's Invincibles." As we know, they still retain their name in our own time, and their smartness; and it is remarkable that Napoleon III. is said to have advised the modern formation of this unrivalled body of men. 'I am quite provoked at the folly of any man,' writes

Southey to his sailor brother Tom, 'who can feel a moment's fear for the country at this time.'

Meanwhile the Rea flowed on and made music among the pebbles, and Englishmen were free! Her liberty was her own! Like the celebrated Coco de Mer of the Seychelles, it may be planted elsewhere, but will only produce fruit on its native islands! Such is the wide distinction between liberty and unbridled license! Tacitus' words were words of sadness and in an evil time:—

Permissa vulgo licentia, atque ultio, et satietas.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF GEORGE III.

Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep!

CAMPBELL'S *Mariners of England.*

Le Prince qui aime la guerre, et qui est en état de la faire, qui peut en espérer sa gloire et son agrandissement, et qui préfère la paix par vertu et par raison, c'est un héros dont le nom doit tenir un rang distingué dans les souvenirs des hommes.—MALLET, *Histoire de Danemark*, iii. 178. (Said of Magnus.)

Σὺν δ' Ἔρις, οὐρανόμηκες ἀναστήσασα κάρηνον.

TRYPHIODORUS.

Nec vero ille in luce modo atque in oculis civium magnus; sed intus domique præstantior.—CIC. *De Senect.* c. iv.

To the best and wisest, while they live, the world is continually a froward opposite, a curious observer of their defects and imperfections; their virtues afterwards it as much admireth.—HOOKER'S *Eccl. Pol.* V. vii. 3.

Hadst thou but known Anselmo,
How would thy heart have bled to see his sufferings.

CONGREVE, *The Mourning Bride*, act i. sc. 1.

I WAS walking by Hanwood Churchyard one morning early after a thaw had set in—I cannot name the year, but it was certainly not in 1804, as the writer was not born till two years afterwards—when I saw the swollen roots of the yew-trees, the slender ones of last year's growth, bursting through and loosening the few stones that then remained of the wall next the Rectory, and under the posts and rails; and I bethought me how time made inroads on us all, unfixing our bones and sinews, as these roots were doing by the wall of the time-honoured cemetery of my childhood; and perhaps I

thought the more of it as I had recently read these lines of Madoc :—

> Release our brethren,
> Recal the wanderers home, and lead them to thee,
> By cordial confidence, by benefits,
> Which bless the benefactor. Be not thou
> As the black and melancholy yeogh,
> That strikes into the grave its baleful roots
> And prospers on the dead.

I suspect what I here mention in connection with the living and the dead of dear old Hanwood must have been in 1830, as I first read Madoc at Keswick in 1829 ; if so, it is almost forty years after this I read what follows, on the grave of Leonidas, in Frederica Bremer's 'Greece and the Greeks': 'One of the largest of the stones was cracked, and the crack was becoming still larger to make room for a fig-tree which had struck root into it, and now softly crept over the grey stone with its succulent green leaves and young boughs. It was evident that it was intending to grow into a large tree. And, growing up out of the grave of Leonidas, spreading abroad its juicy fruit, its protecting crown, the tree would one day have a deep significance. To me the young fig-tree in the gravestone was at the present time a prophecy.'

Stranger things have been connected together than Hanwood churchyard and the grave of Leonidas, and still the moral comes out :—

> Patriam tamen obruit olim
> Gloria paucorum, et laudis titulique cupido
> Hæsuri saxis cinerum custodibus ; ad quæ
> Discutienda valent sterilis mala robora ficus :
> Quandoquidem data sunt ipsis quoque fata sepulchris.

Perhaps it was the foreboding state of things—public and private—at the commencement of the year 1804 that originated this train of thought. Whether or not, towards the middle of January the King was again threatened with his former malady, and continued more or less unwell for some time ; for a day or two, indeed, on the first access of his illness, he was thought to be in imminent danger. Any who will take the trouble to refer to the historical dates for the day will see

with what anxiety the Government was summoned—or even to the 'Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon,' who said so feelingly, 'God grant that no future chancellor may go through the same distressing scenes, or be exposed to the dangerous responsibility, which I went through and was exposed to during the indispositions of my Sovereign!'

The commencement of the year was cold and trying, and many wild ducks were killed on the Rea in January and February. Those only who have seen and ate the wild ducks of the valley know how fine they are when compared with those in the Fens and those taken in decoys. They are certainly what the *Liber Albus*, or 'White Book of the City of London,' calls 'the best river mallards.' I may add as a curiosity, that in the time of Richard II. these best mallards sold at 3*d.* each, whilst the 'dung-hill mallard' (a very applicable name to the scavenger duck) only fetched 2½*d.* In those days the best woodcock cost 3*d.*, the best pheasant 1*s.*; partridges were 4*d.* each, a curlew 6*d.*, a heron 1*s.* 4*d.*, and a bittern 1*s.* 6*d.* The curious reader may turn to such prodigious feasts as that one, for instance, at the installation of Archbishop Nevill, brother to the Earl of Warwick, in the days of Edward IV., and he will collect at once how fond our ancestors were of feathered fowl. 'Wherin,' says old Fuller, 'whoso noteth the number and the quality of the guests (all the nobility, most of the present clergy, many of the great gentry), will wonder where he got meat for so many mouths; whilst such who number the dishes thereof will more admire where he got mouths for so much meat.' After which he gives the bill of fare, and then adds: 'How long this entertainment lasted is uncertain; but by the pork, doves, and woodcocks eaten therein it plainly appears kept in winter, when such are in season; and how the same can be reconciled with so much summer fowl as was here used I little know, and less care to resolve.'

Meanwhile there was a constant talk of invasion, and Pitt even, as it is well known, was at this time, as were others, very anxious about the inefficiency of the Navy, and on March 15 we find his motion on the subject. My Talking Friend said that 'heart of oak need never be wanting, much

and feelingly as he deprecated the destruction of his race;' and he would add, 'Oaks and walnuts were long in growing, but when grown there was no English wood that could compete with them for ships and gun-stocks.' And the old tree was right, and his leaves shook as with a smile—

> In motion of no less celerity
> Than that of thought.

It was at this time, when Lord Grenville deserted Pitt, his former friend and relative, that George III., who styled the Grenvilles 'the brotherhood,' observed, 'they were always either governing despotically, or opposing Government violently;' words which Wilberforce endorsed when he said 'the Grenvilles were so wrong-headed and warlike.' Nevertheless, the coalition of Fox with the Grenvilles was acceptable to many, and the party was stronger than many people supposed; and it was at this time that Wilberforce said of Addington: 'I really feel for him—he is a better man than most of them, though not well fitted for the warfare of St. Stephen's,' where he thought his 'temperance and conciliation should be connected with more vigour.'

Independent of the present antagonism between himself and Pitt, Addington is mentioned here because his name was well known in the old town of which Sir William Pulteney was yet one of the burgesses. Men spoke of him as the personal friend of the good old King, and looked upon him as an upright and amiable man, and therefore, even if no great statesman, yet much to be respected and held in honour. Even to the present day his name is held in pleasant remembrance, and when he died in February 1844, the title of Viscount Sidmouth was still acknowledged to be a deserved one.

Later in the year—it was on Sunday, December 23—another interview, and a more satisfactory one, took place between Pitt and Addington. It took place, through his kindly arrangement, 'at Lord Hawkesbury's seat, Coombe Wood, situated about two miles from Addington's residence in Richmond Park, and about the same distance from Pitt's villa on Putney Heath.' Political motives, no doubt, had a good deal to do with it, but it was satisfactory that old friends should join hands again, and many in the old town said so. As

in many other cases, the reconciliation was a 'give and take' one, for 'the Doctor,' as Addington was named, was a proud man in his way, and could fall back upon the personal friendship of his sovereign. In the words of the old romaunce:—

> Strong is the batayll, and perlous
> To behold, and full dolorous;
> Prowde men of armes been they bothe,
> To gyff it up lyghtly they be ryght lothe.

On asking my Talking Friend what was the state of the valley of the Rea at this time, he answered with hesitation, and his midsummer-shoots quivered. Clearly, in his 'heart of oak' he was not satisfied.

The sun shone brightly, and, as I was sitting beneath the Old Oak's shade, an aged man passed by whose grey locks fell upon his shoulders. On my inquiring who the stranger was, strangely enough my Talking Friend did not know—he had never seen him pass that way before; adding 'that he looked like George Bagley—but that the astrologer had died years ago, leaving a name of great learning behind him.'

And it called to my mind things I had heard of him when a schoolboy at Shrewsbury, and how he had published a 'Guide to the Tongues Ancient and Modern, being short and comprehensive Grammar of the English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldaic, and Syriac Languages, each at one view'; and yet, strange to say, though not an unread man, I have never to this day seen the book. But what chiefly attracted a schoolboy's notice was his fame for casting nativities, and his knowledge of astrology, hinted at by my Talking Friend.

He thought his views and dreams almost prophetic, and would quote many instances of his intuitive penetration, admitting at the same time his mistakes, as in the case of Napoleon, who he predicted would die in 1810. A self-taught scholar almost, he lived beloved and died regretted by his townsmen. The Old Oak told me he was well known in the valley, being a great lover of scenery. One of his favourite walks—and a long one it was—was that gorge in the Oaks Woods where the little stream, so full of speckled trout,

comes trailing down amongst the rocks. As Southey sings in 'Madoc':—

A blind man would have loved that lovely spot.

The following extract concerning him is from Hulbert's 'Additions to Phillips': 'He was the son of reputable parents, who, in the decline of life, suffered from adversity; the filial affection of their son, however, rendered the evening of their days peaceful and happy, his genius and industry supplying their various wants. Mr. Bagley was an *original*: his religious creed was peculiarly his own—his opinion that the spirits of serpents, and all other animals of the same nature, are what are called evil spirits, was no less singular than the ability with which he could defend the notion. He also considered the final destruction of these evil spirits, and the spirits of wicked men, as a sure consequence of the just indignation of the Divine Being.' To which it is added: 'He fell a sacrifice to his love of music and literature, intense study laying the foundation of the disorder which terminated his existence, October 1, 1812, in the 54th year of his age.'

With the commencement of the year 1805, the King's better health and natural flow of good spirits gave much satisfaction to those around him. But all this while age was creeping on, and his sight grew worse and worse. Indeed, the speech delivered in Parliament at the commencement of the Session of this year was the last he ever delivered, and it, too, was printed. All the other speeches till the Regency in 1811 were delivered by Commission. It was on July 4 that Sir Joseph Banks informed the Speaker that a cataract was completely formed 'in one eye, of which he has lost the use for some time past. He has no direct vision with the other eye, but can see downwards, to distinguish what he walks upon. He knows persons at the distance of three or four yards. He has not been able to read a word for some time, but can sign as usual with great clearness and steadiness.' And I bethought me of poor old Manoah's words in the 'Samson Agonistes,' when Milton, no doubt, was thinking of himself, and of 'wisdom at one entrance quite shut out':—

But God, who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst t' allay
After the brunt of battle, can as easy
Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast;
And I persuade me so.

Early in February this year there was a heavy gale, and the storm came soughing and moaning through the valley from Habberley Hole, so often spoken of in these pages, and my Talking Friend had to lament the loss of several noble oaks in the neighbourhood—bad news which he was sure to hear of beneath his time-worn boughs, of which it could not be said—

As on a mountain top the cedar shows,
That keeps his leaves in spite of any storm;

for his were sadly shattered always when the wild winds were hushed.

Clearly my Talking Friend was vastly proud of the many oaks of the old county, and Christ's Oak that gave name to Cressage, and the Shelton Oak, were in his eyes as venerable as the 'Lion Oak' of Hatfield Park, though thirty feet in circumference still, and dating back a thousand years, and yielding acorns full as numerous as his own.

So thick-set with oaks was Shropshire in former days that many parts of it might have been called, in old Domesday phrase, *Acleia* or *Acklai*—that is to say, the oaks of the '*lea*,' '*ley*,' or '*plain*.' The oaks of this county, called *Hach* in Domesday, have been spoken of before. Ack, Ackley, or Okeley Park is in Leicestershire; and near to the old Roman Postway, called Stoney Street, in Surrey, is 'Okeley or Aclia—so called from the number of oaks growing about it—where King Ethelwald, son of King Egbert, obtained an eminent victory of the Danes'; and hard by is Okewood Bridge. 'The Maiden Oak is not an uncommon landmark in Sussex.'

My Talking Friend would often say to me in his humorous way—'for many a joke had he'—that although men and places were called Ashley and Elmsley—The Ashes, The Elms, The Poplars, and so forth—yet that the commonest o

all names was Oakley, and it was a name which always commanded respect, even taking in the rosy-cheeked Richard Oakley, who so long and so faithfully drove the lead-waggon from Snailbeach—

> Even in the downfall of his mellowed years,
> When Nature brought him to the dust of death.

Of old hawthorns, likewise, my Talking Friend spoke with heart-of-oak feeling ; and, in truth, those at Loton Park, hard by, and those at Eatington Park, Warwickshire, still bear the bell, though not to be compared, even after their sort, with the mighty oaks of Kyse Park, Worcestershire ; of Keddleston, Derbyshire ; or the old dottrel, dottred, or doddered ones of Castle Hay and Rolleston Parks, Staffordshire ; or with Okeover on the banks of the Dove. How my time-honoured chronicler groaned (Virgil's account of Polydorus scarce equalling the doleful creaking of his ancient trunk) when I told him of the destruction of 14,000 oak-trees on the disforesting of the old Forest of Hainault, which made Epping and other widespread forests to tremble in their places. No doubt my Talking Friend would have endorsed Winifred's words in the 'Devil's Law Case' :—

> Why, 'tis
> A more ungodly work than enclosing the commons.

In March this year there was great joy throughout the whole part of the valley between Hanwood and Pontesbury, for on March 19 the heir-apparent of the old homestead at Meole married the daughter of Colonel Wood of Hanwood House ; and for half a century or more they were the blessing and the comfort of all around them. But on this head I need not say more here, as I have endeavoured to portray their lives in a small volume entitled 'The Last of the Old Squires,' to which Walter Savage Landor paid this tribute : 'The style and sentiments remind me of Addison and Goldsmith, and of a greater man than either—my dear old friend Robert Southey.' The reader can judge for himself; and Elihu Burritt's American view of the old squirearchy is worth considering : 'When one of them owns a whole village, church and all, he is generally called "The Squire," but most of them

are squired without the definite article. They still boast of as good specimens of the "fine old English gentleman" as the country can show, and I am inclined to think it is not an unfounded pretension, although I have not come in contact with many of the class.'

Few now living remember this red-letter day in Hanwood—perhaps Kitty Lloyd only, by the brookside, now between eighty and ninety, who told me all about it not a year ago. Colonel Wood came to tell her all, and she said, 'The rose of the valley is gone!' On which he said, 'She will soon come back, and her sister Maria' (afterwards Mrs. Witts) 'will still teach the children.' 'Tis little more than sixty years since, and all that is mortal of them is within their silent graves in their dear, dear old churchyard, to which the rippling of the brook makes music!

It was the beginning of summer, and the May-fly was on the shallows, and the trout were sporting, and as I sat beneath the old oak, one whom I well knew passed by with two great chub, which he held by the gills, saying, with humour in his eye, that he had 'lobbed' them out of the great pool in Rogers's field—a farmer who lived close by. His name was Challoner, the cousin, I think, of old James Challoner the shoemaker. He was a strange fellow—knave and humourist combined—full of arts, and ears, and old snatches of songs; and I can particularly recollect that he had a rooted dislike to a tailor, by name Owen, who had a son that sat on his board as closely as a hen sits on her nest. A much better man than himself was poor old Owen, though a precisian certainly, and with a presbyterian turn of speech; but whenever they met he would hum these lines, which, of course, he did not know to be Barnaby Googe's:—

> To Banbury came I, O profane one,
> And here I met a Puritane one,
> Hanging of his cat on Monday
> For killing of a mouse on Sunday.

Evidently he had no Banbury zeal about him, but he was an odd, queer fish, and one of the characters of the valley. After all, he was rather a droll than a profane person; a rambler he

was likewise, and had just been to see the works at Pont-Cysylltau, on which Telford was now engaged, and which were just about to be opened. Like many of his caste, he was given to superstitions and charms, and had always in his pocket the dried roots of the peony—quite as good as coral for children when teething—a crooked sixpence, and the tip of a newt's tongue, together with one of a raven, dried and entire, which he considered of great virtue.

And the old man passed on with his 'lobbed' chub, which, no doubt, he was taking to the housekeeper at the old homestead, and I heard him say:—

> He that will not when he may,
> When he would he shall have nay.
> Aha! Aha!

About this time the old town was thrown into a sort of confusion, for they lost their old member, Sir William Pulteney, who, as burgess, had represented them for seven successive Parliaments—since 1774. He died in London, June 5, and was much regretted as an independent man. His means were large, and he was not a time-server. It has been said that he was the richest commoner in the nation, that his funded property amounted to near two millions, and that he was the greatest American stockholder ever known. His name is still held in remembrance.

It was on October 17 this year that the great battle took place between the French and the Austrians, in which the latter were defeated by Marshal Ney. The ascendency of Napoleon's power may be dated from the capitulation of General Mack at Ulm.

It is not to be concealed that at this time the hearts of many in England were almost failing, and it was all that the victory of Trafalgar, on October 21, could do to inspirit them. That dearly-earned victory in which Nelson fell, as Southey wrote to his brother Tom, 'in a blaze of glory'; having said before, 'He leaves a name above all other admirals, with perhaps the single exception of Blake, a man who possessed the same genius upon great occasions'; adding, 'We ought to name the two best ships in the navy from these men.' The

general reader is referred to his 'Life of Nelson,' the delight of all sailor-boys, like 'Robinson Crusoe.' He truly said, 'The death of Nelson was felt in England as something more than a public calamity. Men started at the intelligence, and turned pale, as if they had heard of the loss of a dear friend. An object of our admiration and affection, of our pride and of our hopes, was suddenly taken from us ; and it seemed as if we had never till then known how deeply we loved and reverenced him.' 'Twas not to be said of Nelson :—

Non reddet sterilis semina jacta seges.

The last letter that the King ever wrote to Mr. Pitt, dated November 11, was on the subject of this glorious victory, which put an end to all Buonaparte's thoughts of invading our seaboard.

As might be expected, the death of Nelson caused a great sensation in the vale, and the master of the old homestead at Meole bought his 'History' by Collingwood, as soon as it was published. Pitt's last words in public were on the Lord Mayor's Day, and with reference to this glorious victory : 'Let us hope that England, having saved herself by her energy, may save Europe by her example.' And who of my age does not recollect old Braham thundering out,

'Twas in Trafalgar's bay, etc.

One of the last surviving 'mids' who assisted when Nelson was carried down into the cockpit is the present Admiral Lyons, whom I have the pleasure of knowing. I put my little grandchild between his knees, and he asked her if she knew who wrote the 'Life of Nelson' ; to which she replied readily enough, 'Yes, Grandpapa Southey.' Upon which he told her the value of that unrivalled piece of biography, and then, showing her the picture of Nelson's death, said : 'You won't see me there, for I was but a middy, but there I was, and helped to carry him down.' Admiral Lyons is now in his eighty-second year (I write this, January 22, 1868), so that if this dear child of six lives she will be a chronicler of Nelson's death :—

Peace rest his soul !
His sins be buried in his grave,
And not remembered in his epitaph !

But notwithstanding this glorious victory of Trafalgar, it was a year of distress and trouble and anxiety; for although our navy swept the seas, Napoleon's forces scourged the Continent, and by so doing threatened England. On December 2 was fought the fatal fight of Austerlitz, on which resulted the Peace of Presburg—which was but war in disguise—on the 26th. No doubt this battle dealt Pitt's death-blow. He was now at Bath, where he had gone after the tidings of Ulm, which he could hardly credit, as a last resource, and there Canning brought him the sad and bitter tidings. After that he never lost what Wilberforce called his 'Austerlitz look.' The worn machinery of the body was giving way. Half a friend, and less than an enemy, might have said, as Aufidius did to Coriolanus:—

> Thou hast a grim appearance, and thy face
> Bears a command in 't; though thy tackle's torn,
> Thou shew'st a noble vessel.

Old Mrs. Humphreys—a tall, gaunt old dame—by the bridge-side at Hanwood (not the present stone bridge, but the old Pons Sublicius), was notorious for her mint and elecampane cakes, and all the boys of the village frequented her inner room or shop (never was a smaller one, not even old Wood's at Gloucester), so full of antique sweets. Years afterwards I perfectly well recollect to have seen Buonaparte there, sitting on a cannon, or a steaming tea-pot, or a sort of balloon, prepared for the invasion of England, and he was painted very red. I am afraid that mint and elecampane cakes are past and gone, like Buonaparte the First. How thin we were used to scrape them—even till we saw the light through them! Years and years ago the good old woman has passed away, still preaching that

> All our lives are but death's counterfeits.

How often beneath the weir-hole there, with a mint-cake in my hand, have I watched the Persicaria collecting the sand in its roots, like the *Arundo arenaria* of Norfolk and Suffolk, with its *stolones* of twelve feet long—or, as it is called, the marram, or sea-grass—collects and binds the sands together there. One can quite understand the irate tendency of the Hollander's

speech, whether our own Hollander of old time, or the modern Dutchman, which wished his ill-conditioned neighbour, 'undammed in this world, and damned in the next,' as well as perceive why cutting of rushes was a felony. All the sands beneath this old weir-hole were held together by the Persicaria, as, indeed, they were in the fields called the 'Patches,' before mentioned; and so it comes about that 'not worth a rush' may be understood otherwise than in the proverb. 'Branch and rush' —i.e. root—twice occurs in our Authorised Version.

In an old account-book of about this date, belonging to the old homestead, I find this entry: 'A Will[e] (*sic*) for catching fish, 7*s.*, May 10th'; and in this year there was a great catch of eels on the first November flood, and very good they were after being for an hour or two in fresh pump water, enough (as with carp and tench) to purify but not to kill them. The classical reader may recollect, with all Shrewsbury boys, Syra's orders in the 'Adelphi' of their favourite Terence:—

> Congrum istum maximum in aquâ sinito ludere
> Paulisper.

I pick up from the old account-book of the old homestead that on July 21 and August 10 this year legs of mutton were bought for 3*s.* 9*d.* and 5*s.*, but the weight is not specified. May 4, a strike of barley sold for 6*s.* 10*d.*, and one of wheat for 15*s.* 6*d.*

Early in the year 1806, probably after some of the heavy storms which swept over the island at this time, a whole flight of woodcocks fell in the Hayes' coppice, and the father of the Last of the Old Squires and himself—both excellent shots—killed them to a bird. 'They shot,' they said, 'till their gun-barrels were hot.' In those days they had it pretty much to themselves, as few men had a qualification, and the licence for those who had cost 3*l.* 4*s.*; increased afterwards to 3*l.* 13*s.*

Parliament met on January 21, the day when the writer of these pages was born, and who, for the love he bore to the old homestead, and to the valley to the Rea, has thrown them together, as a relaxation under pressing parochial work,

so beguiling care and trouble, and heavy, heavy bereavements, and craving pardon at the mercy-seat—

'Ο Θεὸς, ἱλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ.

Truly may I say of the old homestead of Meole, in the words of the 'Testament of Love'—Chaucer's or not: 'More kindly love have I to that place than to any other in yerth, as every kindly creature hath full appetite to that place of his kindely engendure and to wilne reste and peace in that stede to abyde.'

On January 23 Pitt died at his home at Putney, acknowledging that he had not been sufficiently a man of prayer, but throwing himself '*entirely* upon the mercy of God, through the merits of Christ.' He was prematurely worn out. As Sir Robert Farquhar said to Lord Malmesbury: 'At the age of forty-six he died of old age as much as if he had been ninety.' As in Nelson's case, who was but forty-seven, the mind had worn out the body, although it is still true, and ever will be true:—

Hardihood
Helps mortal men but little, if that
They join not wisdom.

He never lost the Austerlitz look, and, as Wilberforce said, he was 'killed by the enemy as much as Nelson,' presently adding: 'Poor Pitt, I almost believe, died of—a broken heart; for it is only due to him to declare that the love of his country burned in him with as ardent a flame as ever warmed the human bosom, and the accounts from the armies struck a death-blow within.' His funeral took place on February 22, and after pronouncing the titles over his grave, the herald declared, '*Non sibi sed patriæ vixit.*'

Meanwhile, on Pitt's death the Grenville Administration was formed, with Fox as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. It would seem as if the death of his great rival had modified his views and opinions. At all events, he never appeared to so great advantage as now, and the good old King received him graciously. So much so, indeed, that Fox replied to his kind words, saying: 'My deeds, and not my words, shall commend me to your Majesty.' Might we not

venture to say—for the shades of death were already gathering about his head—

> Thy duty and thy happiness were one?

For, perhaps, in some other words of this feeling mistress of the lyre:—

> The finer instincts, that, like second sight
> And hearing, catch creation's undersong,
> And see by inner light,

were working their influences on the mighty statesman's worn-out body.

About this time the name of Rowland Hill was much bruited about in the county, and my Talking Friend often heard of him through Mr. Fox, Sir John's steward at Hawkstone, where he lived at the Hermitage, and where I very well remember speaking of Joanna Southcote, wondering who or what she could be. Amongst other things which Mr. Fox told to the father of the Last of the Old Squires, with whom he acted as co-trustee, was that Rowland Hill not only preached but *vaccinated*; and the extract following, from the Chronicle of the 'Annual Register' for the year, shows that the time-honoured tree was not mistaken. The statement is made under March 3: 'The Rev. Rowland Hill has travelled through Kent. He preached on Sunday week to 700 of the children who attend the Sunday-schools, and on Wednesday morning following vaccinated as many as applied to him before nine o'clock at Chatham.' On May 17 following, being the anniversary of Jenner's birthday, he stated at a meeting of the Jennerian Society, held at the 'London Tavern,' that he had vaccinated 5,000 subjects without a failure. Calling to mind his commanding presence (for I recollect him well), methinks no parents would have been urgent in their ignorant excuses before him. I may venture to refer the reader to something about the small-pox, and about Rowland Hill likewise, in my 'Sea-Board and the Down.'

Dan Chaucer somewhere calls nature or spring—I forget which—'the Vicaire of the Almightie Lord'; and scarcely had the spring put on its glorious apparel than the whole valley was swept with a terrific storm—wind and rain, thunder

and lightning. The Welshmen said, as they passed on their way from Montgomery beneath the Old Oak, that they had never known the like; and a traveller from Monmouth said that the lightning was 'a perfect blaze,' and they thought the world was coming to an end. My Talking Friend reported it a year of storms, especially in July and August. Never was a more restless time than what followed the year's entering the summer tropic. The atmospheric disturbance was continuous. On July 24 London was visited by such a tremendous storm as made ancient worthies refer to the 'great storm' of November 26, 1703.

It was owing, probably, to the sultriness of the summer, and the great charges of electric matter, that there were so many of the swallow tribe in the valley this year—so much so as to attract the notice of my Talking Friend, who could hear the quick snap of their bills as they caught the flies in passing. The valley was a favourite resort, and so was the dear old homestead, because no one ever thought of disturbing them, looking on them as messengers of peace. No Shrewsbury boy ever forgot those words about the Castle of Macbeth:—

> *Dun.* This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
> Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
> Unto our gentle senses.
> *Ban.* This guest of summer,
> The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
> By his lov'd mansionry, that the heaven's breath
> Smells wooingly here: no jutty frieze, buttress,
> No coigne of vantage, but this bird hath made
> His pendent bed, and procreant cradle: Where they
> Most breed and haunt, I have observ'd, the air
> Is delicate.

As for the old homestead, they built all round the house and all round the stables. In the latter a part of the window was always left open for them, and they built inside, usually rearing two broods. The Last of the Old Squires had reason to think that the same birds came annually to the same place, and he loved to watch them. In a MS. note under 1830 I find the following: 'Swallows built in the stable for three years. The first brood left July 1. They

began to lay in the same nest about the 20th, and took two broods away with them.' Under which is added, 1846: 'A catchfly built over the little parlour window. Had two broods. Came again in 1847, and did the same thing.' To which I may add that in 1866 blackbirds did the same thing in the vicarage garden at West Tarring. Though so timid a bird, they became perfectly tame, and I talked to them many times a day. I noted also that the cock bird regularly took his turn sitting.

As might be expected, the departing flights of swallows this year were very great, as was noticed not only by the time-honoured Oak, but by all the country round. Some barns at Meole were their great trysting-places. And I called to mind the last lines that Hayley ever wrote, on seeing them congregate upon his turret before their departure—perhaps his best:—

> Ye gentle birds that perch aloof
> And smooth your pinions on my roof,
> Preparing for departure hence,
> Ere winter's angry threats commence;
> Like you, my soul would smooth her plume
> For longer flights beyond the tomb.
> May God, by whom are seen and heard
> Departing man and wandering bird,
> In mercy mark us for His own,
> And guide us to the land unknown.

Old Colonel Wood was much interested about the trial of Lord Melville, who was, no doubt, culpable—or, as was said by Lord Eldon, guilty of 'culpable negligence' in the discharge of his duty, and of 'criminal indulgence' to his paymaster, Mr. Trotter. He was acquitted on June 12, and the Lord Chancellor, after casting up the votes, declared him 'not guilty,' adding 'that the Lords had fully considered his case, and had found him not guilty of high crimes and misdemeanours charged on him by the impeachment of the House of Commons.' The nation, however, still maintained its opinions.

It was later on (July 6) that the battle of Maida was fought in Calabria, where Sir John Stewart, 'Hero of the plains of Maida,' overcame General Regnier. It might be asked how

such a matter became an interesting one in the valley of the Rea and at Hanwood. The answer is that that high-minded Christian gentleman, the late Captain Witts, mentioned more than once before, married Maria, the eldest daughter of Colonel Wood, and was at Naples, Capua, and Palermo, and in my boyhood used to tell me of the retreat of the English and the Russians into Sicily, and of his being at Capri with Sir Sidney Smith, whom he always spoke of in the highest terms. It was charming, in later days than this, to hear the veteran tell of the Grotta del Cane and its mephitic vapours, and of the Monte Posilipo—so named, as Shrewsbury boys know, by Vedius Pollio, for the salubrity of his villa between Neapolis and Pateoli—and to see him imitate the wild driving of the Russians through the tunnel, and the shake of the reins!

Many lands had the good man seen, as well as the inside of a French prison, where he was fed with *soupe maigre* and horse beans; and in telling us of his different voyages in the Mediterranean he would revert to the Court of Greece, and the Greek islands, which he loved so well, adding that there were no currants like to those of the Morea, which were kissed by the sun of those climes, and swept over by the breezes from the Gulf of Lepanto and Corinth, whence they derived their name. At another time he would tell us of the grafting of the olive-tree, and of its grey-green leaves, and of the mulberry-trees, and of the silkworms. Such was the quiet way in which he would deal out information to Shrewsbury boys, who were always made welcome at his table. As for myself, I always considered his account of the grafting and budding of the olive as the best illustration of Virgil :—

Nec modus inserere atque oculos imponere simplex.

Even within a very few years, when I read the annexed extract from Frederica Bremer's 'Greece and the Greeks,' the kind-hearted, benevolent man's face rose up before me, and the recollection of his and my beloved aunt's constant kindness was comforting when I had sorrow enough to contend with.

The veteran of the Nile and Alexandria likewise often told me of the grand castles in Germany, on the Rhine, and

in Italy; and Mr. Weld himself could not have desired a better *cicerone* when he surveyed them and wrote: 'We are greatly indebted to the quarrels and plundering propensities of the lords of the middle ages for much picturesqueness. Not to please our age did they rear their castles on nearly inaccessible heights; but, happily, the sites are generally those precisely that would be selected by an artist. As we gaze on the crumbling walls of the grand old buildings, we hear in fancy the feet of Time rustling through the wreck of races and dynasties.'

He had possibly in his mind the lines of Dyer's 'Ruins of Rome':—

> The pilgrim oft,
> At dead of night, 'mid his oraison hears
> Aghast the voice of Time, disparting towers,
> Tumbling all precipitate down dashed,
> Rattling around, loud thundering to the moon.

The name of the good officer which has caused this digression will live long in the valley of the Rea—at Meole and Hanwood—who came

> to relief of lazars, and weak age,
> Of indigent faint souls, past corporal toil.

It was in September this year—the 9th—that the whole valley was in a commotion. They were all rushing off to Shrewsbury, said my Talking Friend, to witness the arrival there of the Prince of Wales with the Duke of Clarence. 'As long as I can recollect,' he added, 'the people of the valley would go where there was something to see; and it must be admitted they dearly loved the flow of the beer-tap.' The princes did not stop in Shrewsbury, but went on to Ross Hall (where my old friend John Harley once lived) on a visit to Cecil, afterwards Lord Forester. On the following morning a deputation waited upon them with the freedom of the borough. On leaving Shrewsbury and Ross Hall they went to Loton Park, the seat of Sir Robert Leighton—mentioned in the earlier pages of this work—and there the people followed them from Minsterley and Westbury in crowds—

> As hath the ocean or the Tyrrhene sea
> Small drops of water when the moon begins
> To join in one her semicircled horns.

On September 12 died Lord Thurlow at Brighton, at the age of 75 or 76 (not 71, as in the 'Annual Register'), well known in the old county; and, notwithstanding his gruff harshness, this real Sir Mungo Malagrowther was no common man, but one for whose society even Dr. Johnson was willing to prepare himself, liking to know of it a day before. All readers of 'Bozzy' will recollect how the literary autocrat said, 'I honour Thurlow, sir; Thurlow is a fine fellow, he fairly puts his mind to yours!' It has been frequently said, in verse and prose, that 'no one ever looked so wise as Thurlow.'

When he left Loton Park the Prince of Wales had gone on a visit to the Marquis of Stafford at Trentham Hall, and there a sorrowful messenger arrived proclaiming the death of another great man—Charles James Fox—who breathed his last on the 13th, at Chiswick House, the seat of the Duke of Devonshire, *ætat.* 58, and in the self-same chamber, it is said, in which George Canning died—both mighty men!

But the history of Fox belongs not to these pages—the scholar and the politician must look for it elsewhere. With all his wild, wild nature, even Wilberforce could not help loving him! 'I quite love Fox,' are his words, 'for his generous and warm fidelity to the Slave Trade cause. Even very lately, when conscious that he would be forced to give up Parliament for the session at least, he said he wished to go down to the House once more to say something on the Slave Trade.' But I must pass over even Colonel Wood's admiration of Fox—the rest must be left to the historian—and I only refer the reader to Scott's apostrophe to the genius departed in his 'Introduction to the First Canto of Marmion,' quoting only the concluding lines:—

> Drop upon Fox's grave the tear,
> 'Twill trickle to his rival's bier;
> O'er Pitt's the mournful requiem sound,
> And Fox's shall the notes rebound.
> The solemn echo seems to cry,
> 'Here let their discord with them die.'
> Speak not for those a separate doom
> Whom Fate made brothers in the tomb,
> But search the land of living men,
> Where wilt thou find their like agen?

Happy, perhaps, that these mighty politicians were in their graves; for even sadder times were coming, and lengthened war rather than peace loomed in the distance; and what the hot old Indian colonel of Hanwood said was coming came.

The star of Napoleon was in the ascendant, and on October 14 he fought the fatal fight of Jena, after which he advanced on Berlin. As is too well known, the battle of Auerstadt, under Davoust, was fought on the same day. The Berlin Decree, and the interdict against England, which declared the British Islands to be in a state of blockade, and that all Englishmen, wherever the French were, were to be treated as prisoners of war, was issued on November 21. Time was it, indeed, for men to look narrowly and to speak anxiously one to another.

Alive to impending danger, but not afraid, it was at this time that the poet Wordsworth wrote the following fine sonnet:—

NOVEMBER, 1806.

Another year! another deadly blow!
Another mighty empire overthrown!
And we are left, or shall be left, alone;
The last that dare to struggle with the foe.
'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know
That in ourselves our safety must be sought;
That by our own right hands it must be wrought;
That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.
O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!
We shall exult if they who rule the land
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,
Wise, upright, valiant; not a servile band,
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,
And honour which they do not understand.

My Talking Friend told me that the winter of 1806 and 1807 was one of the mildest that he had ever known, and that up to Christmas the ferns in the woods were hardly browned. And I may note in passing that the ferns of the district have always been noticeable. The woods above Hanwood, the Minsterley woods, and the Oaks have always fine specimens—though not like to those of Eastwell Park, in

Kent, where they have been gathered fourteen feet in height—majestic as the *Osmunda Regalis* in its glory.

What my Talking Friend said of the mild weather, and of the primroses and many flowers in bloom, and of the birds pairing and building their nests quite a month in advance of St Valentine, whom Chaucer makes to say:—

> By my statute and by my governance
> Ye do chose your Maker—

all this I find recorded elsewhere, together with the following remark in the 'Annual Register': 'It is worthy of remark that the heat of the weather was exactly the same on June 24 last and December 24: on both days the thermometer being nearly 60°.' In the same volume is given: 'A list of plants in bloom, at Market Bosworth, in Leicestershire, and its vicinity, from January 1 to 31, 1807, demonstrative of the remarkable mildness of the season.' The reader will hardly be able to credit it.

It was at this time, my old friend added, that a jolly sailor came into the valley, 'on May Day,' as he said joyously, squirting the quid from his mouth and pulling up his blue trousers, though January was not half run. He had been with Nelson at Trafalgar, and had a brother tar at Lydles Hayes, who was in the same ship with the then Lieutenant Witts at the Nile; and greatly did he amuse the frequenters of the 'Lea Cross' and the 'Cock' with all sorts of stories. A veritable sailor in these parts was no common visitor, and for him Dikky Tummas, the landlord of the 'Cross,' did not *mix his drink*, as old John Diggory said he did for all chance customers, and he was well entertained; neither did the landsmen find any difficulties when he told them of the 'Ballyruffian' and the 'Switzer'—meaning, of course, the 'Bellerophon' and the 'Swiftsure.' But of all the yarns he spun, that of the 'Flying Dutchman' astonished them the most. As before hinted, he was not a native of the valley, but had an old relative at Habberley, whom he came to visit after he had been to Lydles Hayes and Lebotwood—some four miles from Church Stretton. A pleasant and cheerful companion was this old sailor, who, for want of better craft, once or twice

visited the barges at Pool's Quay, by the Welsh Bridge. He said, however, that the bargemen were but 'land-lubbers,' and that they knew nothing of the points of the compass. Clearly the land was not his element, and everyone believed him when he said that 'as soon as there was not a shot left in the locker he should be afloat again'; and no doubt so it was, and the sound of the waters, rushing and roaring against the war-prow, was to him

More musical than the pipe of Hermes.

In these days our countrypeople were fond of quoit-pitching, and there were many good players at Cruck Meole, Cruckton, and Hanwood. This, said my Talking Friend, was the only game the jolly old tar ever joined in; and he said that when they were becalmed, and old Shrewater (by which he probably meant the captain) was in good humour, they did something of that sort on deck. One or two of the players were especially clever, pitching their quoit as sure as an Australian native would his boomerang, and the sailor's remark was that it might be turned into a deadly weapon in a fight—little thinking that an Indian people so used them.

It was on February 19 that Mr. Whitbread moved for leave to bring in a bill 'for promoting and encouraging industry among the labouring classes of the community, and the relief and regulation of necessitous poor.' This is a matter which even to this time has taxed our energy; for, as Tacitus said long ago, 'Naturâ infirmitatis humanæ, tardiora sunt remedia quam mala'; and we are still ventilating the question. It is, indeed, as Warburton said in a sermon preached in 1767—'the law which quarters the poor on their several parishes grew in time so intolerable a burden both on the landed and commercial interests, and so difficult to be shaken off, that the Legislature hath now employed more than one age in seeking for the proper remedy, and hath not yet found it.' The Act of 1834 did something—other Acts have done more; but there is more, much more, to do—

Yet oft revolved—as some pale hope deferred,
Seen indistinct in rereward depths of time.

My Talking Friend told me that in the midsummer of

this year they were dried up in the valley with easterly winds—that his leaves were almost shrivelled, and that vegetation was hardly ever more backward. His own midsummer-shoots could hardly be called such ; his bark cracked again, and was as hard as the Pontesbury stone with which they were mending the roads. Southey, writing under June 13, mentions a like state of things : 'I never remember to have felt such heat in England, except one day fourteen years ago, when I chanced to be in the mail-coach, and it was necessary to bleed the horses, or they would have died there'—no doubt from the staggers. 'In the course of three days the glass fell forty degrees, and the wind was so cold and violent that persons who attempted to cross the fells beyond Penrith were forced to turn back.'

It is after such easterly winds, and when banks of clouds rise behind them, that the spires of Shrewsbury, especially St. Mary's, come out so grandly from the Hanwood Banks. Many and many a time have I looked at them as a man with the delight of a child, and daily could I visit that sweet spot.

Pleasant is it to descend from those lovely banks and to commune with the silent dead in the Hanwood churchyard. The Icelanders call a churchyard '*sálu-klid*,' or 'soul-gate,' and the notion is a pretty one ; for though the body be turned to dust, '*the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God.*'

It is Leonora says in one of Webster's dramas—and they are sweet lines—

> All the flowers of the spring
> Meet to prepare our burying ;
> They have but their growing prime,
> And man does flourish but his time ;
> Survey our progress from our birth,
> We are set, we grow, we turn to earth.

But then is the spring-tide of the soul, and that is '*full of immortality!*' And thus we need read but as a warning Gruffyth of Coredana's lines on the death of Philip Sidney—that hero of our younger days :—

> Oh, why should man be puft with pryde,
> Or beare a loftye sayle,
> Since Death doth in a moment make
> The hawtest courage quayle ?

No state so strong, no fort so firme,
No bulwarke half so sounde,
But soon is topsie-turvie turned,
And tottering dasht to ground.

It was on June 14 that the battle of Friedland was fought, in which once more the fortunes of Napoleon were in the ascendant. 'The battle of Friedland,' says the French bulletin, 'is worthy to be numbered with those of Marengo, Austerlitz, and Jena.' It was indeed a bloody fight.

Later on, July 7, was the Treaty of Tilsit. The first meeting of Buonaparte and the Emperor Alexander took place on June 25, on a raft on the river Niemen. As is well known, Prussia was sacrificed; but though some were disclosed as early as the latter end of August, the *secret articles* of this celebrated treaty were not discovered till long afterwards. It has been reported that for three days previous to the signing of it the Emperor of all the Russias was 'actually in the state of a prisoner to Buonaparte.' After this he subscribed himself 'Napoleon, by the grace of God and the Constitution, Emperor of the French, King of Italy, and Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine.' Still later on in this year he began to intrigue in the Peninsula, looking to the subjugation of Spain and Portugal; but what relates to the imprisonment of the Prince of Asturias concerns not these pages, though it was a subject of much conversation at Hanwood with the old Indian colonel and Captain Witts.

Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides.

On September 23 a comet was visible in the neighbourhood of London, appearing to the naked eye as a star of the first magnitude. No notice seems to have been taken of it in the valley, and whether there was a 'comet vintage' abroad I know not. I only know it was a fine apple year, and as the apple-gathering in Shropshire, as in Herefordshire, is a sort of holiday for the women-servants, it was a pleasant time at the old homestead, and one calls to mind how the girls of St. Valery go to *faire ses pommes*.

The latter part of the month of December was bitterly cold in the valley, and further north—about Shapfell, Penrith, and Keswick—it was intense, and a remarkable instance is quoted

in the 'Annual Register' as early as the 6th. Southey wrote to Richmond on December 1 that so deep a snow had not been remembered since 1767, that the drifts were seven or eight feet deep, and that they had had no post for three days.

It should have been mentioned that early in this year died the well-known Thomas Urwick. He was born, it is said, at or near Shrewsbury. Under any circumstances, he was a thoroughly good and excellent man, was educated by Dr. Doddridge, and became one of his fast disciples. He had long ministered to the Protestant dissenters at Clapham, and had recently resigned this post from advanced years and feeble health. He was well known and esteemed in this locality, and the reader will find a true account of him in the 'Annual Register.' I rather wonder not to find his name mentioned in Wilberforce's Diary.

Relative to the valley, I should mention that at this time pomoculture was greatly on the advance. The Last of the Old Squires and John Clavering Wood of the 'Marsh,' the godson of the Indian Sir J. Clavering, took up Mr. Knight's experiments of Downton, and, if many of them failed, he did good in his generation as a horticulturist. But I hardly like to speak of Downton Castle, or of R. Payne-Knight's 'Homer' now before me, on the *Prolegomena* of which dear old Butler lectured so well. Nobody anatomised his faults better, no one knew the Digamma so well. The copy before me belonged to the able Bishop Mynster of Copenhagen, and I bought it at his sale.

Meanwhile Buonaparte was striding with gigantic strides; but, as Wilberforce said pithily, 'This man is manifestly an instrument in the hands of Providence; when God has done with him He will probably show how easily He can get rid of him.' One does not easily forget such words, nor those of the poet in his 'Pilgrimage to Waterloo':—

> For not, like Scythian conquerors, did he tread
> From his youth up the common path of blood:
> Nor like some Eastern tyrant was he bred
> In sensual harems, ignorant of good:
> Their vices from their circumstance have grown,
> His, by deliberate purpose, were his own.

Not led away by circumstance he erred,
But from the wicked heart his error came ;
By fortune to the highest place preferred,
He sought through evil means an evil aim ;
And all his reckless measures were designed
To enslave, degrade, and brutalise mankind.

CHAPTER L.

THE PENINSULAR WAR.

Summon detraction to object the worst
That may be told, and utter all it can ;
It cannot find a blemish to be enforced
Against him, other than he was a man :
And built of flesh and blood, and did live here
Within the region of infirmity.

DANIEL, *On the Death of the Earl of Devonshire:*
SOUTHEY'S *Brit. Poets*, p. 574.

The great distinction which constitutes all the tranquillity of a nation is founded not only on religion, but on reason and nature, which never confound things really distinct in themselves, and which can only subsist in consequence of that very distinction.—MONTESQUIEU'S *Reflections*, &c. cxxii. p. 213, *Transl.*

A king must make religion the rule of government, and not to balance the scale ; for he that casteth in religion only to make the scales even, his own weight is contained in those characters, 'Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.' He is found too light ; his kingdom shall be taken from him.—BACON'S *Essays : Of a King.*

A patriot king—why, 'tis a name which bears
The more immediate stamp of heaven, which wears
The nearest, best resemblance we can show
Of God above, through all His works below !

CHURCHILL, *Gotham*, Book III. p. 4, 4to.

THAT eminent naturalist—an old Shrewsbury boy and my schoolfellow—Charles Darwin—writes in his recent work on 'Animals and Plants under Domestication': 'Parrots are singularly long-lived birds, and Humboldt mentions the curious fact of a parrot in South America who spoke the language of an extinct Indian tribe, so that this bird preserved the sole relic of a lost language.'

And there is an analogy between Humboldt's parrot and a book like the present. Other books retain and recount the

history of England, but it is only a collection of papers like these—with which might be compared Bishop Kennet's Parochial Antiquities, attempted in the 'History of Ambrosden, Buraster, and other adjacent Parts in the Counties of Oxford and Bucks'—which will preserve what would soon be the lost historical data, and, so to say, the 'lost language' of parishes like Pontesbury and Hanwood, and of houses like the old homestead of Cruck Meole. Perhaps, as the French proverb speaks, '*Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*,' but they are local histories which make up a county one, and although Mr. Eyton's 'Antiquities' is a great help, we want our county history still. Every educated man might quietly add much to the general fund—

> In his own pleasant fig-tree's shade,
> Which by his household fountain grew,
> Where at noonday his prayer he made,
> To know God better than he knew.

It was an aged man—bent like a willow, but of a cheerful countenance, whose cheeks the morning frost had coloured like a red-streak apple—that was passing by the way and stopped to rest awhile beneath the venerable tree, and I knew him, as a boy, by the *sobriquet* of 'A bit of bread and cheese, and a *bite* of cold potato.' I asked my Talking Friend his name, and, strangely enough, he said he did not know, but that he had passed and repassed for half a century at least, and always went by that name. It was clear he was not quite as wise as his neighbours—some would have called him 'daft,' for my Talking Friend added, he was 'as free as a Tantony pig,' and welcomed by the children of every household. I wonder if he knew the meaning of the saying? If he did the people did not, for they had a rougher form of proverbial speech generally applied to what Stubbes in his 'Anatomie of Abuses' calls 'swill-bowls upon their ale-benches,' and this was 'As drunk as David's sow,' an explanation of which may be seen in Grose's 'Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue,' most probably made up for the nonce by some wag.

Parliament met on January 31 this year (1808) when the expedition to Copenhagen was a subject of much discussion.

It was Mr. Windham who said so pointedly, 'He would rather Buonaparte was now in possession of the Danish fleet, by the means to which he would have resorted in the seizure of it, than that England should have got it in the way she did. The ships would be rotten when the effervescence of national feeling would live in the remembrance of national injury.' It was still alive and quick as late as 1834, but the Dane never returned evil for evil, but was the most hospitable of men.

Meanwhile reports reached the valley and the old colonel regarding Spain which excited him almost to a frenzy. And true enough, as it turned out, the King of Spain published his abdication at Aranjuez on March 19, and on April 5 was transmitted to Buonaparte, at Bayonne, 'the sword that Francis I., King of France, surrendered in the famous battle of Pavia, in the reign of the Emperor Charles V. of Spain, which had been kept in the royal armoury since 1525.' It was emblematic of the surrender of the crown. How could this proud and ancient people bear the intrusion of Joseph Buonaparte?

How can these contrarieties agree?

May Day this year was a lovely day—but it was a borrowed one—and all the early part of the month was extremely cold, with frequent falls of snow, throughout the whole of the country. In the valley of the Rea the people suffered much from throat complaints and troublesome catarrh.

And I call to mind how one day, not many years ago, I observed a *man* with a large throat pass beneath the venerable tree, and I remarked to a companion—was it old John Price?—that although one often saw *women* with goitres, one rarely saw *men*. And this led me to ask my Talking Friend if he remembered many large throats in his time!

There was a humorous shake of his boughs as he replied, 'There were no throats in England better equal to swallowing good ale at the "Cock" and the "Lea Cross" than those of the valley!'—adding archly, 'But that is not what you mean, and all I can tell you is by hearsay, that the dwellers by the course of the Severn by Shrewsbury, Worcester, and Gloucester have always been more or less subject to such glandular enlargements

—luckily, however, not so hard as the knots and gnarls on my old doddered trunk—but, for the valley of the Rea, I never heard of any there. The old man that has just passed did not belong to this part of the country. His name is William Williams, a Welshman, and he may have picked up his large throat from drinking the snow-water of Plinlimmon in his youth, but in his later years I am inclined to think he seldom finds any water that is good!'

On the expression of this witticism the shake of my Talking Friend's leaves and boughs—for he literally shook his sides—seemed like loud laughter! Sooth to say, he was heart-of-oak, nor would he have understood Thorwaldsen's saying, 'I cannot understand how a grown-up person can laugh.' True it is, we have read the saying that THE SAVIOUR wept, but never laughed; but the latter portion of it is but a tradition, albeit sorrow for man's sin drank up His spirit even to sighing; and the Bible says, '*There is a time to laugh*,' telling us at the same time how constantly we have to moan in secret!

Meanwhile, the mention of the goitre turned me to my notes, for certainly in my boyhood the large throat was common.

In the 'Wanderings of a Naturalist in India' the author tells us that in the Himalayas it is 'very prevalent after the age of thirty.' Apparently, the sources of the Ganges and the Jumna, like the Severn here at Worcester and Gloucester, convey this malady. 'Most of the natives,' says Lord Combermere in his 'Journal,' 'have the goitre, and I observe that their voices are affected by it.' And again, speaking of a village on the side of the Panbul, 'The people did not appear more comfortable than those of other villages, and the throats of the peasants were much larger than lower down the river. The priests told me that it was in some measure occasioned by the drinking of the river-water which comes from the snow, but they attribute it more to the use of water from a well in the village.' The former cause, no doubt, is the true one, though perhaps even yet we have hardly arrived at a perfect conclusion.

Southey tells us, in that magnificent work, the 'History

of the Brazils': 'In the northern part of the province of S. Paulo goitres are common; but it is said they are not so frequent now as they were in former times.' To which he adds in a note: 'The swellings in the neck, which Mr. Mawe noticed in this province, were very different from those which he had seen in Derbyshire and other mountainous countries.' 'In the case of the Indian,' he says, 'not only there appeared that protuberance from the glands, commonly called a wen, but lumps from half an inch to three inches in diameter hung from it in an almost botryoidal form.' 'A colony of converted Lules moved their settlement because the water produced swellings in the throat,' &c. But, 'There is no snow in this country. It is also certain that in countries where the people may be said almost to have nothing but snow-water, the goitre is not known.' Thus uncertain is the testimony, and medical authorities still differ greatly. But all will admit, painfully, that sights so monstrous in humanity

Quite confound Nature's sweet harmony.

Still, there is a very general notion that snow-water has something to do with wens and goitres, and, no doubt, it will be maintained.

Old Colonel Wood, so often mentioned, was greatly pleased with Sir Samuel Romilly's motion, brought in in May (the 18th) this year, on the 'Criminal Law of the Country.' He would constantly say that our laws were Draconic and written in blood. He was a great reader of Shakspeare, and would quote the line with great emphasis:—

No beast so fierce, but knows some touch of pity.

The good man tried to untie what Fuller called 'knots more than Gordian,' and to this day we owe much to his earnestness. We recollect, most of us, how he was overwrought. I know not who wrote the lines, but they are true:—

Our God requireth a whole heart, or none,
And yet He will accept a broken one!

The wakes this year at Pontesbury were thronged with people, and the fair was held half the night. 'The dealings

there,' said my Talking Friend, 'were as irregular as those evechapynges my time-honoured father used to tell of. Fairs, indeed, formerly, like Parliaments, were mostly held at night;' and there was again a shaking of his leaves, and something like unto a laugh when he said: 'It is well, no doubt, that the irregularities of the wakes are done away with, but the forefathers of our hamlets loved their amusements!'

Certainly strange things were done at these evechapynges of the wakes, and as the fair was literally in the churchyard as well as all around it, those old words in Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne' are applicable :—

> Therfor men saye, and wel as ruele,
> The nerer the chirche, the fyrthyr fro Gode!

My Talking Friend added that many years ago a notorious mountebank frequented the wakes, and did a great business in his way. The curious part of his history was that he was not only a 'salesman,' but a 'preacher' too, and when he could not do business one way he did it another. But nobody ever believed or trusted him, 'and he lied for the whetstone!'—an old form of speech which I had not heard for many and long a day, albeit

> They say, A crafty knave doth never want a broker.

Evidently my time-honoured chronicler looked upon him as 'the lying'st knave in Christendom,' not excepting Saunder Simpcox, whom Duke Humphrey of Gloucester taught the use of his legs for Queen Margaret's diversion :—

> It made me laugh to see the villain run!

On June 12 and 13 this summer the heat was so intense as to exceed that of the hot Sunday and Tuesday of 1790. It was succeeded by a fearful thunderstorm which burst over Bristol, and was felt throughout the counties of Gloucester, Worcester, and Shropshire. My Talking Friend recollected it well, and how the whole of the country from Habberley Hole to the old homestead of Meole seemed to be a blaze of fire, whilst the crashes of the thunder were terrific, and many noble trees were struck. He knew it was this summer, because John Blower and Chrysanna Clarke were married

early in the year at Hanwood by licence, which the rector, the Rev. George Holland, said was not a common occurrence there.

My Talking Friend had another reason to remember this storm, for it was all but the death of an old man—a kind of pig-dealer—named Eddowes, who traversed the country between Montgomery and Shrewsbury, and had considerable dealings at Asterley, Pontesbury, and Minsterley. This notable worthy was something of a wag, and used to say in his cups that the world ended at Minsterley and began again at Montgomery. So that it was, in fact, a sort of *finis terræ*, or Finisterre.

His way of travelling was in a sort of ramshackling gig, which he said a 'mounsheer,' or grinning 'Johnny Crapaud,' once called a *misérable fiacre* in the streets of Shrewsbury; but he was a wanderer over the land, and driven out of his own country, and poor; and so, said Eddowes, I let it pass and made no remark. In this identical gig it was that our friend was caught in the thunderstorm, and where he could get no shelter. So quick were the flashes and so loud the thunder, and his horny hands were so pounded by the hail-stones that they became benumbed, and he could no longer pull up his terrified horse. The consequence was that he rushed over a heap of stones by the road-side, snapped the shafts, and chucked out poor Eddowes, who was so much hurt as to be obliged to remain in Minsterley for weeks, till brought round by one of those clever men we had in those days—a Mr. Skrymsher—a well-known surgeon, who lived not far off. How all this became known at Meole was simply because Eddowes had disposed of fourteen pigs and a 'rat-ling' which belonged to the Upper House, hard by which the Old Oak stood. Had the Frenchman seen him in this plight he would have said he had the *mal de fiacre*, no doubt, and have tendered his small services!

My Talking Friend did not altogether approve of the Last of the Old Squires planting as many poplars as he did—those by the Weir in the orchard were planted this spring—nor did he apprehend the value of the willows by the brook-side. It did not occur to him that, even if of no other use, they were effectual in stopping the 'horned flood,' and were often

felled in the bends and turns of the river for that purpose. As for firewood, they were dangerous and almost useless—they threw out so many splinters. The Frenchman just referred to would have repeated his own proverb :—

Pain frais et bois vert
Mettent la maison à travers.

Parliament was prorogued on July 4 till August 20, and on July 12 Sir Arthur Wellesley left Cork for the Peninsula, and, arrived at Corunna, conferred with the Galician junta on the 20th. The combats of Roliça and Vimiera took place, the first on August 17, the latter on the 21st, and from this time the old county became vastly interested in all that occurred, as the after-hero of the county—Hill—was on the ground. Natural was it that the Last of the Old Squires should be interested in the Peninsula, for he and Hill were almost the same year's children, and had been used to hunt together, and afterwards to 'hold the reins' at the Misses Harries', on the Rea-side, when the morning ride and the afternoon feast were those of the olden time. In his after-days the Iron Duke said that many of his great battles had been rehearsed at our public schools. The hunting-field, too, had something to do with them, and such a rider as Hill, who never turned his back on a fence, was little likely to show it to his foe. All these matters, however, belong to the historians of the Peninsular war, Southey and Napier, and will only be mentioned in these pages as occasion calls. It may be added in passing that the bells of Shrewsbury and of Pontesbury were rung whenever the name of Hill was returned as a party to any fight. Ringers were a very irregular set in those days, as they are now, and needed articles which I am afraid were never kept. Many in the county were not dissimilar to those still to be seen 'in the ground stage of the tower of St. Clare, Cornwall.'

It was on July 27 that Joseph Buonaparte, the intruder, fled from Madrid, having pillaged churches and palaces, on which the Spaniards said, 'As he could not put the crown upon his head, he put it in his pocket.' As for Napoleon himself, he said when he seized upon the possessions of the

Church, that he only took back what had been given to the Church for the support of religion and promotion of piety; but, as the munificent donations of his predecessor, Charlemagne, had been used for very different purposes, it was very fit that they should be recalled.

Later on, in August, an event took place which roused all England, and even the valley of the Rea was all in a commotion when the news came. I allude, of course, to the miscalled Convention of Cintra, by which General Junot and the defeated French army were allowed to evacuate Portugal. In a military point of view it was not considered disadvantageous to Great Britain; but all England thought a great opportunity was let slip, and the outcry was violent in the extreme, and, as it was very well known, the King disapproved of it. It was 'concluded on August 30, and ratified by the British commander, not at Cintra, from which it has been denominated, but at Torres Vedras. Nothing hardly ever so irritated Wordsworth. He gave me his Tract, written at the time, and alluded to in his two sonnets. At this time he and Southey thought pretty much alike relative to the Convention.

My Talking Friend said he had often heard the Convention of Cintra spoken of; but, looking to Portugal, his thoughts ran rather upon his brotherhood, for was not the cork we use for the bottling of our wines but the bark of the *Quercus robur*, an oak of the country? Whereupon he began to expatiate, as was his wont, on the excellences of the oak tribe in general. Was not the coronation-stone of the 'world-old Celtic races embedded in the new Plantagenet oak'? Was not the effigy of Henry V., that glorious monarch, as it lay stretched out, 'cut from the solid heart of an English oak'? And what was its plating of silver, and its head of silver, compared to hearts of oak? Is not the head lost? but does not the oak remain? And he rounded off by saying it was well of Edward IV. to grant fourscore oaks for the repairs of the sanctuary at Westminster, as no wood bore the test of time so well. Oak, in fact, in my venerable chronicler's eyes, had the strength of Chaucer's Destiny:—

The Destiné, mynistre general,
That executeth in the world overal
The purveans, that God hath seye by born :
So strong it is, that they the world hadde sworn
The contrary of a thing by ye or nay,
Yet some time it schal falle upon a daye
That falleth nought eft in a thousand yeere.
For certeynly our appetites here,
Be it of werre, or pees, other hate, or love,
All it is reuled by the sight above.

All else that my Talking Friend seemed to remember locally was, that the year was abundant with nuts and apples, and that Mr. Knight's fruits, of Downton Castle, were still gaining ground.

It was Christmas time, and the time of holidays, and my Talking Friend took upon to speak of the happiness of boys, when they could enjoy themselves in the country, as our family had done from generation to generation. 'Mischievous,' he would add, 'they are of course, and in summer will break my midsummer-shoots, and later on attack me for the acorns ; but their prattle is pleasant, and I rejoice to hear it at all times.' In truth, Paley never spoke more pleasantly when he said, 'I seem, for my own part, to see the benevolence of the Deity more clearly in the pleasures of very young children than in anything in the world. The pleasures of grown persons may be reckoned partly of their own procuring ; especially if there has been any industry, or contrivance, or pursuit, to collect them ; or, if they are founded, like music, painting, &c., upon any qualification of their own acquiring. But the pleasures of a healthy infant are so manifestly provided for it by *another*, and the benevolence of the provision is so unquestionable, that every child I see at its sport affords to my mind a kind of sensible evidence of the finger of God, and of the disposition which directs it.' And I bethought me of the lines which Richard West wrote to Horace Walpole about their schoolboy days :

Oh, how I long again with those,
Whom best my boyhood's heart had chose,
Together through the friendly shade
To stray, as once I strayed !

Their presence would the scene endear,
Like Paradise would all appear;
More sweet around the flowers would blow,
More soft the waters flow!

The commencement of the year 1809 was one of great anxiety, and Major Hill of Hawkestone was then in the Peninsula; and as there had always been friendly relations between it and the old homestead, news was anxiously expected. Nor was it long in coming, for the battle of Corunna, which took place on January 16, was known in the valley by the 25th, through the Misses Harries, over the brook; and many were they who mourned over the British army—called the 'beautiful'—and over the untimely fate of the brave Sir John Moore. How many might have applied to it these lines of Virgil:—

Jamque dies, ni fallor, adest, quem semper acerbum,
Semper honoratum (sic Dii voluistis!) habebo.

Later on in the month of January (on the 27th) Colonel Wardle brought forward his charges against the Duke of York—'of corrupt practices in the administration of his power and patronage as Commander-in-Chief of the Army.' On March 17 he was completely acquitted, and voluntarily resigned his office—to be resumed again in 1811. It was a sad story from beginning to end, and the name of Mrs. Clarke became notorious.

Vices shall still, but not the same vice reign,
Error in mankind is an endless main.

Wilberforce said she fascinated the House and prevented its degradation by stifling the inquiry; but he wrote as painfully as truthfully to Mr. Hay: 'What a scene are we exhibiting to the world! It is no more than was to be foreseen by anyone who was ever so little acquainted with the House of Commons. We are alive to the political offence, but to the moral crime we seem utterly insensible; and the reception which every *double entendre* meets in the House must injure its character greatly with religious minds. It was because I foresaw all this, that I pressed so sternly for a secret com-

mittee or some special commission of inquiry.' All passed over—but he was certainly right.

Early in February there were very heavy rains indeed, and the whole valley of the Rea was flooded. In Shrewsbury the Severn overflowed all its banks and did much harm in the suburbs of Frankwell and Coleham. So great was the distress amongst the poor, that a subscription was raised, and money, coals and victuals were distributed. As for the lowlands about Melverley they were like the flooded savannahs, or Pantanos in Brazil, and might have been said to be *florentes* (to use the Spanish term), or *in flower*, 'by which is meant that the waters are there so deep, that it is no longer necessary to seek out the bed of the river, but they may navigate boldly in any direction.' Just so was it on the Verniew, and the coracles paddled over the fields. I have often seen the Old Port Meadow in Oxford like a savannah in flower.

'"Very different," said the old Indian, Captain Parry, the friend of the homestead, beneath my shade one summer's day,' broke in my Talking Friend—'"very different the floods of Melverley and the prairies of America—the one to drown and the other to scorch you!"'

Much interest was taken by Colonel Wood of Hanwood, who had seen much service in India, and took part in the Rohilla Wars, in both the sieges of Saragossa, and he constantly spoke of what was suffered there. On February 21, writes Napier, 'further resistance being impossible, from twelve to fifteen thousand sickly beings, having laid down their arms, which they could scarcely handle, this cruel and memorable siege terminated;' and he commences his 'Observations' on it thus: 'When the other events of the Spanish War shall be lost in the obscurity of time, or only traced by disconnected fragments, the story of Zaragoza, like some ancient triumphant pillar towering amidst ruins, will tell a tale of past glory; and already men point to the heroic city, calling her Spain, as if her spirit were common to the whole nation; yet it was not so, nor was the defence of Zaragoza the effect of unalloyed virtue. It was not patriotism, nor was it courage, nor skill, nor fortitude, nor a system of terror,

but all combined under peculiar circumstances, that upheld the work.' Whatever it was, old Colonel Wood, who recollected his Latin history and his Livy, compared it with Saguntum, the immediate cause of the Second Punic War.

In those days an old gaberlunzie man used to pass and repass between Montgomery and Shrewsbury, making a stay at the 'Lea Cross' and at Hanwood, with rolls and sheafs of ballads, some separate, some printed on a sheet as big as the side of a newspaper. My Talking Friend said he was a merry man and always worth his salt, and an acceptable guest on Saturday nights, and at the wakes, for he not only sold ballads, but he would sing many of the songs he sold. He had a clear, twinkling eye, which some one called the 'best vessel of the soul,' as it had living action, most like unto the liberty of thought. The last sheaf of ballads I ever saw hawked about was five-and-twenty years ago at St. Leonards, and I regret to this day I did not buy them. Amongst them, I recollect, was the 'Bloody Gardener,' which Southey used to sing, in funny mood, when asked. Collected ballads have still their worth, and the lines have truth.

The old man's name just referred to was William Brown, and amongst other things he was a bit of an ornithologist. He used to say that the scream of the glede, or kite, on Pontesford Hill crags—our 'roc,' or lammergeyer—was the wildest of all wild cries; nor was he wrong.

Formerly I was learned in ballad lore, but they are gone who would search the Pepysian with me; and I fall back on the lines of Ovid.

It was little that my Talking Friend had to tell me of local affairs about this time. That Lord Byron took his seat on March 13, and behaved ungraciously to the Chancellor, Lord Eldon, did not reach the valley of the Rea; and the excommunication of Buonaparte by Pius VII. did not create so much sensation under the Old Oak as did the finding of a wild-duck's nest on the top of an old pollard-willow by the Cruckton Brook, though he told the then Proctor of the University of Cambridge, the Rev. John Warter, that it was not so uncommon a thing as he supposed.

As a literary person connected with the Darwins of

Lichfield—Dr. Darwin being resident of Shrewsbury—the death of Miss Seward was known in the old town, and in the valley, where the Doctor had friends. She died on March 25, leaving her remains to Walter Scott. On May 13 Southey wrote to Miss Barker, saying, 'She was a woman of great abilities; and if ever I pass through Lichfield again, I shall feel with regret that she is gone.' In after-years the Misses Pritchard of Hanwood—good, kind, clever women—used to speak of her to us as children, and of Mrs. Grant of Laggan. But, as children, myself and my brothers were much more concerned with their *douceurs* before we went to school—with their cakes and wine—and with the tame robin redbreast that used to hop about the vinery. Sure enough, everyone likes Master Robin—'So even without variations,' as Chaucer says—and the one that took refuge in Westminster Abbey, and used to nestle itself on the hearse of William of Nassau's Queen Mary, was quite a pet with the Londoners—as a bird that could show affection for the dead!

A memorial of these kind ladies still remains in the schools erected at Hanwood, as may be seen by the tablet there.

A circumstance must be mentioned here because Hanwood was presently to benefit by it. On June 21 Parliament was prorogued, but previous to this the matter of Queen Anne's Bounty had been taken in hand, and a sum not exceeding 100,000*l.*, it was proposed, 'should be granted to his Majesty to pay the same to the governors of the Bounty of Queen Anne for the augmentation of the maintenance of the poor clergy,' &c., &c. It was calculated that this grant, if continued, would in four years raise the lowest livings in England and Wales to 50*l.* a year. It is, at least so far, satisfactory that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England have now raised all livings with above 4,000 population to 300*l.* If they have robbed Peter to pay Paul, they have done this much.

The little farm with which Hanwood is endowed is on the Verniew, and, if I remember right, bears the name of Criggin.

And at my time of life, now sixty-three years of age, I may well remember the good sermons I have heard there. Nothing could be more simple and short (not more than a

quarter of an hour) than those of the Rev. Charles Wade, who succeeded to the rectory in 1810, Dr. Holland dying on March 13 that year. Portia says well, in the 'Merchant of Venice,' 'Good sentences, and well pronounced'; to which Nerissa replies: 'They would be better if better followed'; and we may all say the same.

It was on July 5 that the battle of Wagram was fought, in which the Austrians were utterly routed. It led to an armistice, and on October 14 to a treaty of peace by which Austria ceded all her sea-coast to France.

On July 27 and 28 was fought the battle of Talavera, in which all Shropshire men were much interested, for Major-General Hill was there, and had a narrow escape. 'The hill on the left of the British was the key of the position,' and, Donkin being repulsed, the French seized the top of it. 'At this critical moment,' writes Napier, 'Hill was sent to his aid; it was nearly dark, and that officer, while giving orders to the colonel of the 48th Regiment, was shot at by some troops from the highest point. Thinking they were stragglers from his own ranks firing at the enemy, he rode up to them in company with his brigade-major, Fordyce, and in a moment found himself in the midst of the French. Fordyce was killed, and Hill's horse was wounded by a grenadier, who roughly seized the bridle also, but the General, spurring hard, broke the man's hold, and, galloping down, met the 29th Regiment, which he led up with such a fierce charge that the French could not sustain the shock.'

It was at the combat of the 28th that Albuquerque, whether from conviction or instigated by momentary anger, just as the French were coming on to the final attack, sent one of his staff to inform the English commander that Cuesta was betraying him. The aide-de-camp charged with this message delivered it to Donkin, who carried it to Sir Arthur. The latter, seated on the summit of the hill which had been so gallantly contested, was intently watching the movements of the advancing enemy; he listened to this somewhat startling intelligence without so much as turning his head, and then dryly answering, '*Very well, you may return to your brigade,*' continued his survey of the French. Donkin

retired, filled with admiration of the imperturbable resolution and quick penetration of the man; but throughout that day Sir Arthur's bearing was that of a general upon whose vigilance and intrepidity the fate of 15,000 men depended. And within a few pages he adds, 'In all actions there is one critical moment which will give the victory to the general who knows how to seize it'; and this Sir Arthur did. His concluding observations ought not to be omitted: 'Hard, honest fighting distinguished the battle of Talavera, and proved the exceeding gallantry of the French and English soldiers. The latter owed much to their leader's skill, and something to fortune; the French owed their commanders nothing; but 30,000 of their infantry vainly strove for three hours on the 28th to force 16,000 British soldiers, who were for the most part so recently drafted from the militia that many of them still bore the distinctions of that force on their accoutrements.' So memorable was the battle of Talavera! As for Major-General Hill, whose part in the fight led to its being mentioned—

> A braver soldier never couched lance,
> A gentler heart did never sway in court.

Meanwhile the political world was restless as the atmosphere when storms are nigh, and Canning did the most foolish thing he ever did in his life—that is, he fought a duel with Lord Castlereagh on Wimbledon Common, in which the latter was disabled by a wound in the thigh. This was on September 21.

The only other matter of much importance that my faithful old chronicler called to mind relative to this year was the JUBILEE, or the fiftieth anniversary of George III.'s accession to the throne. 'You would have thought,' he said, 'that the valley must be left empty, such crowds of people passed on their way to Shrewsbury, where were to be gala doings.' Westbury, Minsterley, Pontesbury, Cruck Meole, Cruckton, and Hanwood furnished no small quota of people, and there was great joy amongst them. It is pleasant to see people happy; and all appeared to be so. Any that would check the hard-handed countryman's small enjoyments and

pleasures—not carried to excess—is an unwise man in his generation :—

> So may you blame some fair and chrystal river,
> For that some melancholic and distracted man
> Has drown'd himself in it.

It needs not to be doubted, indeed, that there was a general joy throughout the whole nation, to say nothing of India and our foreign possessions. 'No monarch,' says Lord Mahon, 'not Henri Quatre, not Maria Theresa, not even our own Elizabeth, were ever more deeply rooted in the hearts of the people that they ruled. How strong and real became the sympathy felt for his health, and the confidence reposed in his integrity! How many millions were looking up to him with a feeling scarcely short of filial! Who that beheld, even in childhood, can forget (it is one of my own childhood's earliest and not least welcome recollections) the warm and enthusiastic burst of loyal affection with which the whole nation, without distinction of party, hailed the Jubilee—the fiftieth anniversary of the accession of him whom every tongue in homely but heartfelt language then proclaimed as 'the good old King!'

Whilst Major-General Hill was in the Peninsula this year there died at Hawkestone Sir Richard Hill, a person of some mark. He was succeeded by his brother Sir John, whom I can well recollect. Old Mr. Fox, of the Hermitage, then brought the news to the old homestead.

As many old Oxford men in the neighbourhood took a great interest in the election, it should be added here that on Dec. 14 Lord Grenville was elected Chancellor of Oxford by a majority of thirteen votes over Lord Eldon. It is reported that George III. should say: 'It would be hard if Cambridge had an Unitarian Chancellor and Oxford a Popish one.' The Duke of Grafton was said to entertain Unitarian views, whilst Lord Grenville was the great supporter of the Catholics. The Duke of Portland died on October 30. Southey's lines on the 'Installation of Lord Grenville' have been alluded to before. On the Roman Catholic question they were at issue altogether, but agreed on the Slavery one.

At the time of the Jubilee above mentioned old Ussle Bussel—that is, old Ursula Evans of Hanwood, our great ally when children, and whose name has been referred to before—had gone to Ludlow, where she had connections or friends. Being a bustling body, she was much put out to have missed the gala doings at Shrewsbury; but she used to tells us, as she watched us eating old Mrs. Humphreys' mint-cakes she had brought us, that if she had missed the rejoicing at Shrewsbury, she had seen old William Purslow and his hedgehogs walking up and down the streets there, 'and he was as much a show as could well be showed'—a civil, inoffensive man, only somewhat too fond of beer. All she said was true, as any reader may see by turning to the 'Annual Register' for the time. Died 'at Ludlow, at an advanced age, that eccentric character William Purslow, self-titled esquire, well known to many persons besides his neighbours for having some years ago so tamed two hedgehogs as to make them to perambulate the streets with him, in a degree of discipline and subjection which astonished the beholders.' The man is no very wise one who supposes the hedgehog to be an unwise beast. It is one of our old dramatists that says, no doubt from observation—

> I have learnt with the wise hedgehog
> To stop my cave that way the tempest drives.

The year 1810 came in restlessly. But the discussions in the House relative to the expedition to the Scheldt, and other discussions there, mattered little to the valley. 'The trouble had come upon the people,' said my Talking Friend, 'and must be borne with patience. Many troubles, from wild storms and tempests, have my brother and I undergone, but they only rooted us the firmer in the ground!' True enough, the good old chronicler was not one to despair of the potency of his country:

> Forsan miseros meliora sequentur.

It was only with newfangled notions and inventions that the venerable tree was put out, and ready to say with Hooker, 'The love of things ancient doth argue staidness; but levity and want of experience maketh apt unto innovations.' For

this reason he could not tolerate the quantity of elms that Mr. Wood was planting at the Marsh; they were but a useless tree, and their roots would only rob the ground. The planting of larches and firs, as at Hanwood, he more readily put up with, for he said they would be serviceable for 'poles,' and there was a virtue in turpentine, though not to be compared with the tannin of the oak. And then he would add, with a humorous shake of his boughs, 'Around the infirmaries of the monks, whether at Shrewsbury, or Canterbury, or Westminster, it was the oak that was planted, and there the sick took their exercise!'

As introductory to this year Mr. Jesse aptly quotes Miss Cornelia Knight, who was still domesticated with Queen Charlotte: 'The year 1810 was a very melancholy one at Windsor. The attempt to assassinate the Duke of Cumberland caused great disquietude. Then followed the afflicting illness which ended in the death of the amiable Princess Amelia; and, lastly, the malady that overwhelmed our excellent sovereign cast a gloom over the Castle which was never removed during the remainder of my stay in the neighbourhood.' 'Dark days, indeed,' adds Mr. Jesse, 'brooded over the royal family; but by far the darkest were those which were in store for the venerable King.'

On February 11 the spire of St. Nicholas Church, Liverpool, fell just before Divine Service—a circumstance mentioned in the valley owing to Colonel Wood's connections and friends at Everton and Wavertree. When William Kewley next came to Meole he told all about it.

Reports reached the valley that Napoleon, having divorced Josephine, was about to marry the Archduchess Louisa Maria, daughter of the Emperor Francis II. The marriage took place at Vienna, by proxy, on March 11, and afterwards at Paris on April 1.

On March 13 Hanwood lost its rector, the Rev. George Holland, or Dr. Holland, as he was called according to country usage. If he was not an energetic man he was a kindly one; and if there is one thing more than another appreciated by the people it is kindness and affability.

A thousand examples I could bring hereof,
But marble stones need no colouring,
And that which every one doth hold for truth
Needs no examples to confirm the same.

It was said that he once thought of cutting down the yew-trees, as they darkened the church, but was dissuaded from doing so; and there they are still. He was succeeded by the Rev. Charles Wade, the rector of my boyhood, whose plain short sermons I have alluded to in a foregoing page.

Later on in the month (March 24) appeared in Cobbett's 'Weekly Political Register' a letter inscribed, 'Sir Francis Burdett to his constituents, denying the power of the House of Commons to imprison the people of England,' on which followed all that civil commotion which so greatly interested old Colonel Wood and his son John Clavering, and probably (it was Southey's opinion) drew off men's attention from the Walcheren. But all this is matter of history, and it will be enough to say here that on April 5 he was voted to the Tower, and committed on the 9th. They that apprehended him found him at that very moment teaching his son to read and to translate Magna Charta. The mob made all who passed his house in Piccadilly take off their hats and cry 'Burdett for ever!' It was with reference to his letter to the Speaker that Sir Samuel Romilly observed 'that, as in his opinion there was no original offence, it could not properly be called an aggravation.' There are those yet living who can recollect how, on his release at the end of the session, flags were inscribed with 'The Constitution,' 'Trial by Jury,' 'Magna Charta,' and 'Burdett for ever!' The number of pictures distributed throughout the length and breadth of the land—the subject being 'His Parting with his Family'—was incredible. I can recollect them in almost every home. And the people said, 'No wonder the sword and the buckles and the straps should fall from the statue of Charles I. at Charing Cross. It was ominous!'

Looking back to Sir Francis Burdett's conduct now, we cannot doubt but that he had the liberty of the subject at heart; but, as he showed in his latter days, he made a wide

distinction between liberty and licence. Somewhere about 1835 or 1836 I often saw him riding on the Worthing Sands when he came over from Brighton. He was a tall, thin, wiry, and very gentlemanly-looking man, and wore top-boots and short breeches. I had some correspondence with him relative to a very worthless servant of Lady Burdett's—by name Steadman; and nothing could be more courteous or considerate.

He is that he is; I may not breathe his censure.

A great misfortune, as I think, befel the village of Hanwood about this time—the establishment of The Manufactory. The first notice in the parish rate-book stands thus: 'May 1, 1808, to May 1, 1809. 17*l.* Marshall & Co., Factory.' It has desecrated the loveliest of villages, and tarnished the fair beauty of one of England's loveliest valleys.

About one hundred and fifty years ago the old Carding Mill stood where the manufactory does now, or rather was built about that date, for it remained till the present unsightly building was erected. It was held originally by one Rowland Ward. He sold it to John Baker, a wool-stapler who lived in Shrewsbury, and latterly at the bottom of the Barker Street; and John Baker sold it to the Marshalls, who had an eye to what the Americans call 'water-privilege,' about 1808.

On the way down to the manufactory from Littlehale's, the blacksmith's shop, stood some old houses which have only been taken down within a few years. They belonged originally to the Altree family, old inhabitants of the village; and there lived old John Cotton, who, if anyone else, knew best how to get a pike out of the weir-hole. They were mortgaged for a small sum to a lawyer of the Marshalls, who was on the look-out for them, and are now comprehended in what is called the 'Factory Row.' The houses alluded to were old timbered ones, and not grinning red-brick like the present ones. No little gravels keep bubbling up now in the tiny stream,

Calculus in nitidâ sic numeratur aquâ,

as they did in days gone by. The 'chemic' of the manufac-

tories has sullied the living waters, and a trout can hardly live in them! And so I might have said of the manufactory, in the words of Robert Brunne :—

A lytyl tale I wyl you telle.

But such words would not be listened to now, and I can only bethink me of what Charles II. said of a fool who was a popular preacher in his own parish—'I suppose his nonsense suits their nonsense!'

The death of Lord Collingwood, a great favourite at the old homestead, was reported about this time—he of whom Nelson said at Trafalgar, 'Look at that noble fellow! Observe the style in which he carries his "ship" into action!' He died in the Mediterranean on board his flagship the 'Ville de Paris,' but his remains were brought home and laid by the side of Nelson's under the dome of St. Paul's. No fitter place for such a man! Few characters will bear a closer investigation. Taylor, the water poet, said in his 'Funeral Elegie on the Death of James I.' :—

A good man's never missed till he be gone,
And then most vain and fruitless is our moan.

Meanwhile the fame of our Shropshire hero, General Hill, was in the ascendant, and it was owing to Lord Wellington's entire confidence in him that he did not cross the Douro in May, still vexed by

Spain's feeble counsels, in delay
As erring, as in action premature.

A report was brought back one day from Shrewsbury market and circulated through the valley that the life of the Duke of Cumberland had been attempted, and it proved to be true. On May 30 his valet, a Piedmontese, Selles by name, from some unknown cause, set upon him in the dead of night, and, failing in his object, destroyed himself. The English, with their usual curiosity in such matters, flocked to visit the chamber of horrors, and to trace the gouts of blood upon the walls!

On June 4 died the celebrated William Windham, than whom few in their day have held a higher position. Inde-

pendent of his position as a statesman, on which various opinions were held, he was the acknowledged star of society. 'Poor fellow!' writes Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster, 'I really felt for him. He had some fine qualities, though I must own I did not rate him so highly as some persons did, except for conversation, in which I really think he was *facile princeps*—decidedly the most agreeable, scholar-like gentleman, or gentleman-like scholar, I ever remember to have seen.' And then he presently adds: 'It has often struck me how soon in public life people are forgotten. With all the feeling for poor Windham—and I really believe there was a great deal—he will soon have vanished from the view of all but private friends, thrust out from the mind by the topic of the day.' It was Shakspeare who said:—

> Perseverance, dear my lord,
> Keeps honour bright. To have done, is to hang
> Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
> In monumental mockery.

Wherever he went, with his flower in his button-hole, he was always the acceptable guest, and his heart always kindled at doing a kindness.

And all at once I call to mind that I had a dear old friend, the late William Davison, chaplain of Westbury, who always wore a flower in his button-hole, winter and summer, and he was just of such a kindly nature. From constant internal suffering he was obliged to take opium, though in very moderate quantities. But the other day I read about an old merchant in Mr. H. Lloyd Evans's 'Last Winter in Algeria,' and thought of him; for though his body was always racked with pain his smile was delightful, and his thoughts always pleasant. This worthy old merchant of Biskra in the desert 'had an oleander blossom stuck over one ear,' 'and I was informed,' says Mr. Evans, 'that it was customary—that it suggested pleasant thoughts and images as the opium-smoker fell into his dreamy trance, and that they were wont to wear it for the rest of the day.' Quite Oriental.

On July 1 this year there was a very violent storm in the metropolis, which was felt pretty much all over the country,

leaving great atmospheric disturbance behind it. So sultry was it throughout the valley that the trout would not sport in the Rea at all. I find a note of the Last of the Old Squires, written about this time, in which he observes: 'July is the worst month in the year to procure minnows, as, after spawning, they retreat into the deep water to recover themselves. It is also the worst month in the year for killing trout in rivers, as they generally confine themselves to the sides, waiting under trees and bushes for their food. I have found the most successful way of taking them to be by walking down the stream or mill pond, and when you happen to see one break water in pursuit of his favourite food, which is flies, if you are fishing with a minnow to drop it gently about a yard above where you see him break water. You are almost certain to take him, as he is then in pursuit of whatever food comes first within his vision; but still, as I said before, July is not a favourable month for trout-fishing.' Never was a more dexterous fisher!

Owing to the name of Hill, Peninsular affairs were a matter of great interest in the old county and in the valley. Ciudad Rodrigo was taken on July 9, and on the very day of its surrender the French cavalry appeared on the plains of Almeida. Its castle was called by Dumouriez the strongest place in Portugal, forgetting Elvas, which, as Southey remarks, is far superior to it in strength. It was captured August 27.

In these days General Hill was watching Regnier at Elvas, ready to 'make a movement on the right bank of the Tagus, in order to cover the road to Castello Branco from Lisbon, which Regnier menaced.' But Lord Wellington's clever movements after the fall of Almeida, General Hill still co-operating, and his repassing the Mondego, and so throwing himself between Massena and Coimbra, is a page in Peninsular history, and needs not to be repeated here. Enough to say that all Shropshire people drank bumpers to Hill's success; and every tap in the county ran with its best nut-brown ale when his name was toasted. On such occasions John Diggory was heard to say that even Dikky Tummas of the 'Lea Cross' did not mix his drink! We will hope that

what Williams said to Henry V. is not always true: 'I am afraid there are few die well that die in battle!'

The storm of July, as I noted above, caused great atmospheric disturbance, and on August 14 and 15 there was another fearful storm in London, when Westminster Hall was deluged, which also was felt throughout the kingdom. Of this time it was that Hannah More wrote from Barley Wood to Mrs. Kennicott: 'We are paying, in common with all invalids, the penalty of this drenching weather. It makes us beautiful without, and sick within. How do you stand it? I just spy something suspicious of what to the best of my remembrance is *sun*, but it is so long since I have seen his face that I ought not to speak too positively.' They had just the same weather in the valley of the Rea and the valley of the Severn, at Worcester and Gloucester.

Later on in the year—September 27 or 29—Genera Hill's name again was bruited abroad in connection with Busaco, though the news arrived in the valley three weeks later. The Sierra de Busaco Lord Wellington thought the strongest in Portugal, and it took the Shropshire hero no little trouble to drive Regnier down the hill. 'Massena himself upon this reconnoitred the position, after which he asked one of the unworthy Portuguese who accompanied him if he thought the allies would give him battle? He was answered that undoubtedly they would, since they showed themselves in such strength. The French marshal replied, "I cannot persuade myself that Lord Wellington will risk the loss of his reputation; but if he does . . . . I have him! To-morrow we shall effect the conquest of Portugal; and in a few days I shall drown the leopard!"' At the end of the year General Hill said, in his quiet way, which all will recollect who have seen him at the Hunt Ball at the 'Lion' in Shrewsbury, walking up and down with his hands in his breeches pockets: 'After all, Massena was not able to drive us into the sea!'

Lord Wellington reached his lines at Torres Vedras on October 9. Trying days were these for British courage, but the commander-in-chief gave the soldiers the best example (as old Woolvin, orderly to Lord Raglan, and till his death coachman to my dear old friend William Woodward of West

Grinstead, and Miss Simms, his niece, at Horsham, told me), for he lived most sparingly, was up by four, and by five rode out and visited his advanced outposts. Good old Woolvin—of seven clasps—was once cut down by a Toledo blade, and he always said that Spanish steel was very sharp—his actual words. When people talked of the hardships in the Crimea, he always said: 'In my day, we were very glad to find a post to rub our shoulders against'; reminding me of what a true Scotchman said when the Duke of Argyle set up mile-stones, to his very great ease and comfort, regardless of distances.

October 26 was the last day the venerable King ever made his appearance in society. On the 29th Lord Eldon and Perceval were at Windsor; and after Lord Eldon's second interview, the House adjourned from November 1 to 15, impressed with coming difficulties.

It was on November 2 the sad blow came—the Princess Amelia died—the desire of the old King's eyes was taken from him. On the last interview she had put a ring on his finger, with a lock of her hair in it and the inscription, 'Remember me!' And as he bent over his dying child she added, 'Remember me, but do not grieve for me!' and they led him away to weep. None knew her but they loved her—the Prince of Wales even, three years after her death, burst into tears at the very mention of her name. She left this world for a better in the twenty-eighth year of her age. On November 11 the poor old King was something better and more composed, asked if her funeral had taken place, and on finding that it had not, selected for the burial anthem the last verse of the sixteenth Psalm: '*Thou shalt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is the fulness of joy: and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.*' So settled was his heart, however unsettled in his poor racked mind, in heavenly places. On the 14th she was deposited in St. George's Chapel, and the good old man's deep, deep sorrow had nothing to do with the hired wail of Oriental weepers, but it was the grief of a bereaved father, and none, perhaps, ever knew the deepest depth of his affliction.

CHAPTER LI.

THE REGENCY.

Hoc scito, nimio celerius
Venire quod molestum est, quam id quod cupide petas.
PLAUT. *Mostell.* I. i. 69.

A time was come to try who triumpht most,
Who take most pains, or who did fray and poste.
CHURCHYARD, *Siege of Edinburgh Castle*, p. 157.

But the dark hours wring forth the hidden might
Which hath lain bedded in the silent soul,
A treasure all undreamt of; as the night
Calls out the harmonies of streams that roll
Unheard by day.
MRS. HEMANS, *The Forest Sanctuary*, xxxv.

No man can be truly for himself unless he be first of all for truth itself, of which he that gains the greatest share (what other detriment or disparagement soever in the meantime he sustain) in the end speeds always best.—JACKSON'S *Works*, vol. i. 175, folio.

Scorn the world, abandon folly,
Purchase faith, that glorious treasure;
Faith is wisdom, wisdom virtue,
Virtue truth, and truth is pleasure.
HOW'S *Devout Meditations*, ciii.

AT the beginning of this year (1811) the King's bodily health was better than it had been, but the mind was in an unhealthy state, and he laboured under two delusions: one, that he was Elector of Hanover; the other, that he was wedded to his old love, the Countess of Pembroke, whom Horry Walpole described, when at the coronation of the King, as 'the picture of majestic modesty.'

The result was great parliamentary complications, cabals, and friction, not unfostered by the Prince, whose eyes were on the Regency, and who grasped at power. And so the

land had much to fear, and thoughtful men said, 'He who was a lover of pleasure, and an undutiful son, was never likely to make a good ruler.' Nor was he an unready scholar who, when he called to mind the orgies at Carlton House, repeated these lines of Claudian :—

> Luxuries prædulce malum, quæ dedita semper
> Corporis arbitriis hebetat caligine sensus,
> Membraque Circæis effœminat acrius herbis;
> Blanda quidem vultus, sed qua non tetrius ulla
> Ultrices fucata genas, et amicta dolosis
> Illecebris, torvos auro circumlinit hydros.
> Illa voluptatum multos innexuit hamis.

The year was introduced by very heavy weather. On January 3 was a dreadful gale from the north-east, which did much damage at Gravesend and Folkestone. It was a drift of sleet and snow, and by the 8th the Thames was all but frozen over. The snowfall seems to have been more severely felt at Boston and Stamford, but it did much damage in the midland counties and in the north.

In the previous summer the elm-trees in Shropshire had been much hurt by the Scolytus, and most weakened branches, if not trees, fell before the blast. Some twelve years later the Scolytus became a great pest; and I well recollect its ravages in Wolsey's Walk, as well as in other trees in the Christ Church Meadow, Oxford, as well as the late Archbishop Whately's remark on good old Dr. Bodwin's (the Sub-dean) having cut their roots to deepen the ditch. It was then, in their morbid and moribund state, that the Scolytus attacked them most. Waterton, the naturalist, observes this elsewhere. Referring to this, Dr. Hibson remarks: 'We rarely, in the lower grades of animal life, see any living creature *destroy*, unless some future beneficial result should be obtained, in order to counterbalance, in some way or other, the destruction.'

'Use the elm,' said my Talking Friend, 'before it becomes useless; but spare the oak, as carefully as did Columba, the Saint of the North, of whom my venerable father used to talk;' but I knew not to what he alluded. Perhaps what has been recently said of the monks of the West may be appli-

cable. 'From all quarters men flocked to learn from him the secrets of spiritual life. Thirty-seven monasteries depended on his guidance, and claimed his care, but his home and his delight was in Derry. The sound of the axe was never heard in its oak woods, and the poor alone might gather the fallen branches for fuel. The place became consecrated in his songs. On each oak-leaf he beheld a white-robed angel seated, and all things in heaven and earth became instinct with gladness. The rapture of the bard broke out into malediction—"Cursed be the man who shall do hurt to this delicious Paradise!"'

On January 6 Lord Eldon saw the King, and wrote to Sir William Scott: 'I saw the King on Saturday for much more than an hour. He is not well, and I fear he requires time. In the midst of this state it is impossible to conceive how right, how pious, how religious, how everything that he should be, he is, with the distressing aberrations I allude to,' and which have just been referred to. On February 5 assent was given to the Regency Bill by the Lord Chancellor and other Commissioners, and the Regent was sworn in at Carlton House.

There was a person called Dick Hinley, whom the master of the old homestead of Meole employed much on all fishing matters, who, no doubt, always had his share of the fish, for he was a notorious poacher, perhaps the greatest in the country, though his kind employer, unless greatly aggravated, would not admit the fact. The truth is, he was, as is often the case, the sharpest fellow in the neighbourhood, and could turn his hand to anything. It was this Dick that used to say that he could frighten most animals with whipcord, a scarlet feather, or a patch from an old soldier's coat, whom he sneeringly would call a 'lobster.' There is no doubt he was right, for he knew all the parks in the county. Certainly he had classical authority, as well as the modern 'Jagd' in Europe and India on his side.

About this time the neighbourhood was infested by a gang of mischievous and malevolent marauders. For some cause or another their object was revenge, for they cut off cows' tails, as in Becket's days they cut off the tails of horses, and uprooted trees newly planted, by the score. This was

done at Whitton and the Marsh, near Westbury, and the consequence was that Mr. Topp, of Whitton, and Mr. J. Clavering Wood, of the Marsh, got down Lavender from London, a name in those days coupled with the Forresters of Bow Street, so celebrated for its officers. I can just remember the circumstances, and some of the particulars. After a time the ringleader was taken and hung, and the gang dispersed. A guinea a day was the modest charge of Lavender in those days, and he came down in person. The spring following poor Lloyd Topp (the kindest and most thoughtless of sailors) and Sir Henry Edwards, whom I well recollect, went up to London to visit Lavender, and he showed them all the wonders of the Seven Dials, the 'Rookery,' and the worst haunts of the thieves of London. What they reported on their return made a lasting impression on me as a boy. I visited the 'Rookery' before it was pulled down, and called it all to mind. How true are Shakspeare's words: 'It is certain, that either wise bearing, or ignorant carriage, is caught, as men take diseases, one of another; therefore, let men take heed of their company.' How many have found out this!

Shortly after this (on May 16) was fought another fight, which Napier thinks never ought to have been fought—the battle of Albuera, in which Marshal Soult, advancing to relieve Badajos, was repulsed by Marshal Beresford. Particulars must be looked for in the histories of the Peninsular War. Southey says (and in this Napier's words imply the same): 'Soult is said to have acknowledged that in the whole course of his long service he had never before seen so desperate and bloody a conflict.' Dreadful must have been the tug of fight when a Beresford wavered!—when a Soult with voice and gesture animated his Frenchmen in vain!

Of our county hero, Napier says at this conjuncture: 'General Hill, having now returned to Portugal, reassumed the command of the second division amidst the rejoicing of the troops, and Lord Wellington directed the renewed siege of Badajos in person.'

It was on the 21st of this month that the venerable King was seen for the last time in public, and in the saddle. 'He rode through the little park to the Green Park. The bells

rang. The troops fired a *feu de joie*. The King returned to the Castle within an hour. He was never seen again without those walls.' These words are quoted by Mr. Jesse from 'Passages of a Working Life,' by Charles Knight. Painfully expressive words. Few at such a time could have said of a man so thoughtful and so good—

> And honour is a mote in Envie's eye.

A few days later occurred one of the early reminiscences of my childhood—the great inundation in the valley—May 27:

> The dreadful spout,
> Which shipmen do the hurricane call,
> Constring'd in mass by the almighty sun.

Amongst my notes—all corroborated by my Talking Friend—I find the following scraps, which properly belong to the records of the valley :—

Heavy thunder with vivid lightning and great hailstorms —a foot deep at the White Grit Lead Mine, and two inches round. The waterspout burst on the Stiperstones ; part of the waters rushed through Habberley, the rest by the Minsterley brook, the whole of which village it utterly deluged. At Pontesbury the water was twenty feet deep. Nine lives were lost there and three at Minsterley. Mrs. Heighway's loss was long talked of, as they were old inhabitants of the place. From Pontesbury the rush of the waters took the course of the Meole brook, and swept through the old homestead, washing down the surrounding wall. It reached Coleham, in Shrewsbury (known from an early story in these pages), at half-past ten at night, with a roar that scared all the suburb, deluging many of the houses. The old town raised 1,862*l.* to help the sufferers, and my Talking Friend said they did well, for many amongst the poor suffered much.

Anyone who has read Mr. Buchanan's 'Scaith o' Bartle' may realise something of this terrible inundation :—

> Snatching in its course
> Boulders and trees and cattle, rushed the scaith,
> A blacken'd yellow rush of waters, foaming
> Whene'er it touched the feet of craig or steep,
> And dizzily whirling round the great tree roots
> To twist them from their beds.

The dear old homestead on the Rea-side, said my Talking Friend, had never seen such desolation before—that delight of

> The guest of summer,
> The temple-haunting martlet.

In the chronicle for the 'Annual Register' this year the reader will find the following words: 'Mr. H. Warter, of Cruck Meole, we are informed, had twenty-six cows, besides other stock, carried away,' but not lost, as the following MS., written in his own hand, which ought to be preserved, will attest. The truth is, that owing to almost superhuman exertions, his losses were few. One heifer was lodged in a pear-tree in the orchard.

MS. Account of the Inundation on May 27, 1811.

As was to be expected, the 'horrid flood' here mentioned did great damage to the brooklands, and all the hay of the year was very coarse and sour. The lower Harrisals were entirely deluged, and the tussocks, of course, that came up in the autumn (called by the country people 'pheg,' or 'fog') were perfectly marvellous. On warm days, 'puss' was always to be found in one of them, not finding elsewhere a form so comfortable.

William, old John Diggory's man, mentioned that a wild goat had been carried down from the Stiperstones into the Minsterley brook, but it was probably a goat from some stables, where they have been kept from time immemorial, under the idea that they are not afraid of fire, and that a horse will always follow a goat. As far as I can call to mind, the nearest wild-goats were in Tredegar Park, Monmouthshire, and Bagot's Park, Staffordshire. Mr. Evelyn Shirley quotes Strutt's *Silva Britannica*, where it is stated that they were originally presented to one of Lord Bagot's ancestors by Richard II.

Throughout the whole of the summer the fields adjoining the Rea were covered with midges and gnats, drawn up by the sun's heat, and very troublesome they were to the ladies of the old homestead.

I may note as regards the valley of the Rea that a marked improvement in husbandry took place from this time, and it was a subject of conversation with the master of the old homestead and his friend, the Rev. C. Peters, of Pontesbury, both observant men; and the latter said, as by the way, Uzziah the King loved *husbandry*, and the wise man added, '*The King himself is served by the field.*' And who would not love fruitful fields?

And I called to mind as remarkable, that in turning to the other hemisphere, 'The Inca himself, at a stated time, once a year, with great ceremony, turned up the earth with a golden instrument, thus teaching the people to regard husbandry as a pursuit not unworthy the greatest among them.' Neither did this idea end with death, for even the corpse of the Peruvian 'is draped in a robe resembling a monk's habit, and round his neck is hung a small bag, containing the seeds of coca, maize, and several other plants, for the commencement of the good man's husbandry in the new world he is about to enter.'

In August this year several people went from the valley of the Rea to see what the Welshmen called 'The Cob'; that is, the great embankment at Tre-Madoc in Carnarvonshire, the work of Mr. Madocks, M.P., for Boston. Amongst others, on a fishing excursion to Festiniog, where in those days lived the redoubtable Martha Owen, very careful of me as my father's son, the Last of the Old Squires, who was greatly struck with it, remarking that he could more easily drain Tall-y-Llyn, a shining little lake, full of beautiful trout. The little inn at the head of it, kept by Yspytty Evans when I was there, was most primitive in its way. I may add that when I was at Tre-Madoc in 1825, a huge kite sat as a warder, peering over the cliffs between it and Pont-aber-glas-Llyn; a rarer bird every day, though once as common in London, and as useful as the adjutant bird in Calcutta. Chesine mentions this, who visited England in the time of Elizabeth, 1571.

On the return of the master of the old homestead, John Diggory said to his man William, 'I shall go, but I shall go alone,' and go he did alone, like the reindeer, and returned and told his story!

It was many years ago, when I was but a boy, that this old humourist, so often mentioned, met an acquaintance on his way to Shrewsbury. They walked together as long as John could tolerate the companionship, and at last he said, 'How far are you going?' 'To Shrewsbury,' he replied. On which John said archly at the stile leading to the Day House, 'I am going to the other side of the town,' and so got rid of his companion, easier than Horace got rid of his bore, the story so well known to all Shrewsbury boys. The truth is, John was the best of companions at the 'Cock' or 'Lea Cross,' but he was as solitary in his walks as the solitary snipe in England —called the solitary snipe elsewhere, as at Upsala in Sweden, but not so.

Old John Diggory was never less alone than when he was alone!

Later on, towards the middle of August, all the people in the valley were taken up by viewing the great comet—one of those 'wild wanderers,' which, as Sir J. Herschel says, 'care nothing for beaten paths.' My recollection of it is clear and defined, and it looked for all the world like a huge fiery birch-rod hung forth in the sky. All the fasces of all the lictors in Rome bound together could not have made up such a beard of fire, and it was visible all the autumn through. The common people, of course, said it was ominous and portentous, and an unusual prodigy; but my Talking Friend said that his venerable father often spoke of 'Cometa, or the Blazing Star' (so it is often called in the 'Saxon Chronicle'), and never recollected anything extraordinary attending their sudden appearance, unless it were a hot summer, and then the battling of the northern lights and a deluge of waters. Nevertheless old Samuel, Captain Witt's servant, maintained that he never heard of any good that came of comets and fierce meteors. Another said it was a bad world burning out for its iniquity. 'I,' says Addison in the 'Guardian'—'I considered a comet, or, in the language of the vulgar, a blazing star, as a sky-rocket discharged by an hand that is almighty.' The chapter on Comets in Sir John Herschel's 'Outlines of Astronomy,' and that in his 'Four Lectures,' is enough for any old Shrewsbury boy. Perchance some

one might say of these chartered wanderers as Shakespeare said of glory:

> Glory is like a circle in the water,
> Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself,
> Till, by broad spreading, it disperse to nought!

Meanwhile he that should look upon a comet as upon a world burning out will likewise call to mind St. Peter's words, and the consummation of all things as now constituted here. But it needs not to say here:

> Vous dirai un petit sermon
> Pourquoi vous ne devez pécher.

On September 30 this year died the Right Rev. Bishop Percy of Dromore. He was a son of a grocer at Bridgenorth, and, like myself, took a Carswell's Exhibition in Christ Church, Oxford. He is mentioned here as a Shropshire man, and because his 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,' first published in the year 1765, and undertaken at the suggestion of Dr. Johnson and Shenstone, was known to me from my earliest years at the house of my maternal uncle, John Claver-ing Wood, Esq., of Marsh Hall, in the parish of Westbury, the son of old Colonel Wood, of Hanwood, the East Indian often mentioned in these pages. The reading of those volumes, and the old folio black-letter Chaucer there, and the old edition of Ben Jonson, first led me to the love of the poetry of all nations which has not deserted me even until now, when I am sixty-and-three years of age. How much truth is there in these lines of Lucretius:

> Nam quod adest præsto, nisi quid cognovimus ante
> Suavius, in primis placet et pollere videtur,
> Posteriorque fere melior res illa reperta
> Perdit et immutat sensus ad pristina quæque.

It was the evening of October 24, and there was a great stir at the new factory buildings at Hanwood, and a great sight of people (the term for a crowd of people, as in the old proverbial lines:

> If youth could know what age do crave,
> Sights of pennies youth would save)

were hurrying thence towards Shrewsbury. It turned out that a fire was raging in Marshall's and Hutton's factory there. It broke out in the flax-room, and did great damage; and their people, like smugglers, felt that they were billeted, and must make their appearance. A good thing would it have been for the valley and for Hanwood had the factory there never been built. Physically and morally it has poisoned that sometime 'HAPPY VALLEY,' and the Marshalls, originally Unitarians, have never speeded what old Latimer, that constant martyr, called the 'Church's plough.' The flax-loom and the Church's plough are very different instruments.

> My soul aches
> To know, when two authorities are up,
> Neither supreme, how soon confusion
> May enter 'twixt the gap of both, and take
> The one by the other.

Having referred to the loom and to the factory—so called by all the people on the same principle of abbreviation as we speak of drawing-room—I will venture to give some curious lines from Lucretius on the subject—for the amusement of some old Shrewsbury boy, noting by the way that Munro, the last learned editor of Lucretius, is a Shrewsbury man.

> Nexilis ante fuit vestis quam textile tegmen.
> Textile post ferrumst, quia ferro tela paratur,
> Nec ratione alia possunt tam levia gigni
> Insilia ac fusi radii scapique sonantes.
> Et facere ante viros lanam natura coegit
> Quam muliebre genus; nam longe præstat in arte
> Et sollertius est multo genus omne virile;
> Agricolæ donec vitio vertere severi,
> Ut muliebribus id manibus concedere vellent
> Atque ipsi pariter durum sufferre laborem
> Atque opere in duro durarent membra manusque.

And so one shakes out scraps from memory, referring all to the old brook-side, and the dear old willow-trees, and the alders, and the poplars, under which I read all sorts of books, from Æsop's Fables onwards, to Shakespeare and Milton, Southey and Wordsworth, Homer, Hesiod, Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, Herodotus and Thucydides—now finding out in my old age that Horace Walpole spoke truth:

'Memory is like a cabinet, the drawers of which can hold no more than they can. Fill them with papers; if you add more, you must shove out some of the former.'

The latest event of the year my Talking Friend referred to was the bell-ringing in Shrewsbury heard on the Hanwood Banks, for the success of Lord Hill in the Peninsula at Arroyo del Molino:

> The town, which from the mill-stream takes
> Its humble name—

a description of which, in his usual felicitous English, the reader will find in Southey's 'History of the Peninsular War.' General Hill's surprise of Girard, as is well known, took place on October 28, and it was the middle of November before it was known in the old town.

'The whole of the enemy's artillery, baggage, and commissariat was taken, the magazines of corn which they had collected at Caceres and Merida, and the contribution of money which he had levied upon the former town. A panic was struck into the enemy, to such a degree, that Badajos was shut for two days and nights, all the fords of Guadiana were watched, and every detachment ordered to rendezvous at Seville.' To which adds Southey, 'This expedition was less important in itself than as it was the first indication of a spirit of hopeful enterprise in the British army; it seemed as if that army had now become conscious of its superiority, and would henceforth seek opportunities of putting itself to the proof. For the Spaniards it was a well-timed success, when all their own efforts tended only to evince more mournfully the inefficiency of their troops and the incompetence of their generals.

The natural kindness of General Hill's heart was shown in the pains he took to save Lieutenant Strearwitz, who was taken prisoner. 'He was distinguished,' says Napier, 'by his courage and successful enterprises, but he was an Austrian, who had abandoned the French army in Spain to join Julian Sanchez' partisan, and was liable to death by the laws of war. Originally forced into the French service, he was, in reality, no deserter; and Hill, anxious to save him, applied

frankly to Drouet, who was so gentle of temper that, while smarting under this disaster, he released his prisoner.

No wonder there was much bell-ringing when the news reached Hawkstone and the old town. As Southey wrote:

> It was a day
> Of surest omen, such as fill'd with joy
> True English hearts. . . . No happier peals have e'er
> Been rolled abroad from town and village tower
> Than gladdened then with their exultant sound
> Salopian walls; and flowing cups were brimm'd
> All round the Wrekin to Sir Rowland's name.

There was not a damsel from the Wrekin's foot to the Breidden, and the Moel-y-Golba, but would have given him the *bedw* or the wreath of acceptance; the *collen*, or the hazel, might serve for others who had never signalised themselves as Hill had done.

The only other scrap of local news that my Talking Friend could call to mind for this year was that an otter got into the coppice ponds above the plantation at Hanwood, and played sad havoc with the master of the old homestead's tench there; but he was more than a master for him, and caught him in a trap. 'In Sweden it is said that if finely pulverised slag or scoriæ from the iron forge be strewed on the banks of the pond he will never come near it.' It may be so, but of this nothing was known in the Valley of the Rea.

If of any man living it might have been predicated, 'This is a happy man!' the master of the old homestead on the Rea-side was that man; for, although in his day one of the first-rate sportsmen in the county, yet he loved to do good continually, as reported in 'The Last of the Old Squires,' and his enjoyments were simple as the simplest. The very tench in the ponds were scarcely afraid of him, for they knew (according to their dumb sense) that when they were taken in the bow-nets it was but to be removed from thence to the Wixhalls, or Silberscott, or the Oaks Hall, or the Pound Meadow, or to some other well-supplied store. His best silk handkerchiefs were stuffed into bolts and water-pipes, which supplied them; and when he reached his home he was one

to have repeated the lines of Catullus, had he been scholar enough:

> O! quid solutis est beatius curis?
> Cum mens onus reponit, ac peregrino
> Labore fassi venimus larem ad nostram,
> Desideratoque acquiescimus lecto.
> Hoc est, quod unum est pro laboribus tantis.

And we enter on a new year, 1812, and Parliament opened on January 7 with the Regent's speech, which was pleasing to all Shropshire people, as containing a reference to the services of Lieutenant-General Hill, the hero of the county. The proceedings in the House of Commons were made remarkable by Sir Francis Burdett's moving an address to the Regent, which was seconded by Lord Cochrane, who 'in his speech particularly dwelt upon the misconduct of the war and the little hope of final success.' It had but one vote in its favour, besides the two tellers, against 238, and Lord Jocelyn's amendment was carried without a division; a result highly satisfactory to Colonel Lyster, of Rowton, my father's old and tried friend, who was high sheriff for Shropshire this year, and a loyal man.

Oddly enough, on the very next day, when complaints were raised against the army—that is to say, on the 8th—Lord Wellington invested Ciudad Rodrigo, which was captured on the 20th; for he said Ciudad Rodrigo *must* be stormed this evening, and he knew well, writes Napier, 'that he would be nobly interpreted.' And what he said was done.

Early this year my Talking Friend said that some colliers, coming from the low country—Ketley was so called in those days—to work in the Arlescot pits, reported how Mr. Batley, of the Old Park, near Wellington, had been found barbarously murdered in a stone quarry near his house. A man named Bailey, he added, was taken up on suspicion, and lodged in the Shrewsbury Gaol.

Meanwhile the work of blood was going on in the Peninsula, and on March 16 Badajos was invested. It was sad, sad work, and it was not taken till April 6. Five thousand men and officers fell in this siege, 'and no age, no nation, ever sent forth braver troops to battle than those who stormed

Badajos. When the extent of the night's havoc was made known to Lord Wellington,' adds Napier, 'the firmness of his nature gave way for a moment, and the pride of conquest yielded to a passionate burst of grief for the loss of his gallant soldiers.'

In the course of years I had heard 'The Last of the Old Squires' mention many superstitions held by the country people, more especially concerning the birds that went and came. I do not recollect his alluding to those underwritten, and I insert them as curious. Year by year our 'folk-lore' passes us by, and we are become so hard and philosophical that it is a question if some men's learning is worth as much as their forefathers' superstitions. The pithiness of the concluding sentence in Bacon's essay on Superstition is unmistakable. 'There is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if they go farthest from the superstition formerly received: therefore care should be had that (as it fareth in ill purgings) the good be not taken away with the bad, which commonly is done when the people is the reformer.'

In those days, said my Talking Friend, and for some years after, there constantly passed beneath my shade a kindly man, who rode high in his saddle, passing and repassing from Shrewsbury to Pontesbury. On a cold day he might always have been known by wearing a spencer. His kindliness of disposition was well known to all the country round.

And I at once knew who he meant—the late Rev. Charles Peters, rector of the second portion of Pontesbury. Originally a Fellow of Queen's—Cornish by extraction, and kin to that C. Peters, of Mabyn, whose critical dissertation on the Book of Job still maintains its place—he had spent some years in the West Indies, returned just before he was superannuated, and succeeded to the living. All his neighbours respected and loved him, for if he was quick and bustling he was always kind, thoughtful, and benevolent. No one, from his residence in the West Indies, was a greater abettor of Wilberforce's labours for the emancipation of the negroes, and, years after, as he lay a-dying, he put together a small pamphlet on the subject, the proofs of which he put into my hands to revise—

a kindly act, in itself of encouragement to a Shrewsbury schoolboy.

The following extract from the Chronicle of the 'Annual Register' for this year, 1812, again reminds me of this kind friend of my childhood, whose son is now the rector of Pitchford: 'At Jamaica, *Ann Wighall*, a free black woman, aged 146. She was brought from Africa at the age of twelve, about fourteen years before the destruction of Port Royal by the great earthquake in 1692.' This, probably, is the poor woman alluded to in Southey's 'Doctor, &c.,' who, when she heard the bells toll for a funeral, used to say 'she was afraid the Almighty had forgotten her.' And I bethought me of the lines in 'The Doom of Aloisius,' which I was just reading—

> For my perpetual anguish all alone,
> Midst many a tormenting misery,
> Because I know not if I e'er shall die.

As far as we know—and I think Southey makes the observation—the greatest instances of longevity recorded are amongst the negroes transported from Africa to the West Indies.

It was the same kindly man, the Rev. Charles Peters, who told 'The Last of the Old Squires' of a wonderful book which was lately sold from the Roxburgh Library, 'The Decameron of Boccaccio,' a little volume printed in 1471. It was purchased by the Marquis of Blandford at the costly price of 2,260*l.* Where is the volume now?

It was somewhere about the middle of May that this kind, benevolent soul, as he rode hastily beneath the old oak tree spoke out in haste, and with much emotion, saying, 'Have you heard the news? Have you heard the news?—bad news—very bad news!'

And sure enough, the news was bad, for Perceval had been assassinated on the 11th on entering the lobby of the House of Commons. The times were bad, prices high, and the people discontented; but this was the act of a crazy man, driven to desperation by his misfortunes—of one Bellingham, a disappointed Liverpool and Archangel merchant, engaged some time in the timber trade. 'It appears,' wrote Lord

Eldon, who, from his anecdote book, thought he had a marvellous escape, 'that the motive of the assassin was merely the desire of revenging himself upon any one, it mattered not which, of the members of the Administration, on account of an imputed neglect of the British Minister at St. Petersburg to procure him redress for certain commercial losses which he had sustained in Russia.' The wretched man was executed on the 18th before Newgate. The page in the 'Life of Wilberforce' which tells how the murderer was visited by his friends, Stephen and Daniel Wilson, and of Mrs. Perceval's kneeling by her husband's corpse with her children, praying for them and for the wretched man's forgiveness, is no common page, but affecting in the highest degree; and very touching is his notice of Perceval himself. 'Perceval had the sweetest of all possible tempers, and was one of the most conscientious men I ever knew; the most instinctively obedient to the dictates of conscience, the least disposed to give pain to others, the most charitable and truly kind and generous creature I ever knew. He offered me at once 1,000*l.* for paying Pitt's debts, though not originally brought forward by Pitt, and going out of office with a great family.'

My Talking Friend informed me that the valley of the Rea was this year visited by very heavy early thunderstorms, at the latter end of May, if his memory served him right. On referring to the Chronicle in the 'Annual Register' I see that my old friend did not speak without his host, and that they burst more especially in Bedford, Hants, Norfolk, and Somerset. At Shepton Mallet a cloud burst, like that on the Stiperstones in the year last preceding, and did much damage. On the 28th of this month another awful storm occurred in the afternoon at Lincoln, in which three boys were killed, who had hidden themselves in a hovel for shelter.

Somewhere about midsummer this year some new coal-pits were opened on the Ascot side, and many specimens of ferns and other leaves were observed in the shaft, and marvelled at by the colliers and country folk; and one wizened old man, who had worked in the Black Country (which would include Wolverhampton, Bilston, Tipton, Dudley, Wednesbury, &c.), declared that they were the works of the spirits of

the mines, never seen now but by those who know of those ancient spells (East Indians would call them 'mantras') by which alone they can be called from their depths. Since then Buckland, Sedgwick, Lyell, Murchison, and other great geologists have taught simple sojourners on the Rea-side more than they could ever have dreamed of. And, but as it were yesterday, no mean poet wrote in his 'Epilogue to Chronicles and Characters'—

> Though it be but a weed or a shell
> That the token of age hath given
> Unto desert or ocean, to tell
> Of how deluge and earthquake have striven,
> Nature doth not despond : nor do thou
> From man's feverish effort hope more
> Than the labouring ages allow
> Nature's infinite patience to store.

Provisions were still high throughout the country, and early in the year there were potato riots in Bristol, Sheffield, Stockport, Carlisle, &c. ; but it was in the clothing districts that the outburst was the greatest. They first commenced at Nottingham in the autumn of 1811, and now spread through Lancashire, Cheshire, and parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire. So Wilberforce wrote in his diary under May 16: 'The state of the West Riding manufacturing districts is dreadful—next to rebellion, smouldering rebellion.' Then, opening his mind to Mr. Hey, 'The reverence for authority, and land, and rank, and high station has been effaced from the minds of the lower orders ; and when the fear of God has no place the consequence is that all control is withdrawn from the bad passions of men. To this cause, I think, may be added the modern system of making expediency the basis of morals and the spring of action, instead of the domestic and social affections, and the relations of life, and the duties arising out of them.' And then, a few pages later, he adds: 'The state of the lower orders in the manufacturing districts is such as I can illustrate only by the figure of the confluent small-pox on a human body ; it is breaking out all over, and pains are evidently taken to infect the agriculturists. My notion, therefore, is that there should be a general association

among the friends of law and order for the security of persons and property.'

It was later on in the year—August indeed was advanced—when the news of the battle of Salamanca, in which Lord Wellington was struck by a spent ball on the thigh, reached the valley. As usual it was brought from Shrewsbury, and all wanted to know about General Hill, the hero of the county. It was fought on the evening of July 22, and was a great fight, as so well reported by Napier, who saw the victor when the battle was over. 'I saw him late in the evening of that great day, when the advancing flanks of cannon and musketry, stretching as far as the eye could command, showed in the darkness how well the field was won. He was alone; the flush of victory was on his brow, and his eyes were eager and watchful, but his voice was calm and even gentle. More than the rival of Marlborough, since he had defeated greater generals than Marlborough ever encountered, with a prescient pride he seemed only to accept this glory as an earnest of greater things.'

The pursuit was continued on the 24th, and ended on the 30th, when Lord Wellington entered Valladolid. It was about this time that he received the news that America had declared war against England, and he knew not how the loan was to be supplied to find the forces which had hitherto come from that country. And thus his mind was harassed again, and within a while the news was spread abroad in the Valley of the Rea—

By this sweet stream, that knows not of the sea.

Madrid was taken possession of on August 12, Joseph Buonaparte, called mockingly by the French 'The King of the Highways,' returning by the roads of Toledo and Aranjuez, and leaving a garrison in the Retiro, the well-known palace at the extremity of the city, which surrendered on the 14th. It enclosed the building called 'La China,' from which the capitulation dates, an odd name to find there.

Meanwhile the harvest had been gathered in, and happily it was a good one, and it was hoped the disturbances in the manufacturing districts would settle down; but the people's

minds continued restless, and the energies of the Government were severely taxed. Every public-house in the land was a stronghold of disaffection. The Swedes nickname a roadside house *Pung Vrängaren*, implying that purses were there turned inside out. With us, at this time, it was treason that was turned out, and all sorts of evil were plotted. It was, indeed, an anxious time, and all men's hearts were more or less disturbed. Good old John Diggory said, 'It was as much as he could do to tolerate much of the conversation at the "Lea-Cross." It was too bad!' To which he added, 'People say there is another comet—and comets never mean well!'

I find out that on September 15 there was a small comet just visible on a clear night; so that John was not without his reckoning.

On October 12 the valley and the whole neighbourhood lost a great benefactor, Dr. Warter of Silberscott. For years he had looked to the necessities of the poor, and twice a week his court was thronged with them from all quarters. He was considered very able in all scorbutic complaints. I can just recollect him. People came to consult him from great distances, and I well recollect a writing-master at Wolverhampton (his name, I think, was Nelson) telling me that he had saved his life. A curious old place was Silberscott, with its fine old cellar, entered from the court. According to the regulations of those days (still, I am told, observed and retained at Lord Hill's, Hawkstone), the ale-cellar was not opened till eleven o'clock—the dinner-hour, in fact, of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Earlier than this hour in the morning the magnates drank feeble beer.'

Towards the end of October there was much rough weather, and heavy gales, which swept heavily through the valley. 'Habberley Hole,' my Talking Friend said, 'was thick and gloomy as he had ever seen it; and a vast quantity of eels were brought down by the heavy floods. He had seldom recollected so many wet days and nights together; and an owl,' he said, 'that had dwelt for long in a hollow of his trunk was so bewildered by the wet that he could hardly keep life together by morning.' In the north of England the weather was heavier still; and in the Shetlands, an Edin-

burgh paper stated, 'There have been five weeks of incessant shakings, winds, and rotting rains, and in the whole time there have been only three dry days; on the whole many bad years have been seen there, but never one like this.'

It was on an afternoon of this month that Westminster Hall was deluged by one of these alarming spring-tides which come in like the Egre, or a Bore, and three boats plied within it, carrying out water-logged barristers and others at a shilling a head. So high was this tide, it is currently reported to have covered the top of the first arch of Westminster Bridge.

Exactly corresponding with the date just mentioned, October 21, was the raising of the siege of Burgos, another military movement in which all Shropshire people were greatly interested, well knowing from Hawkstone the difficult position of Sir Rowland Hill, 'that officer upon whom Lord Wellington might always rely with the most perfect confidence.' He was at this time threatened by Marshals Jourdan and Soult, at the head of 70,000 troops, 10,000 being cavalry; and the Tagus having become fordable, 'it was hazardous for him to maintain an advanced position near Madrid in front of an enemy so greatly superior. It was necessary that Lord Wellington should move towards him, but the corps under his own command should be insulated in consequence of the movements which Sir Rowland might find himself compelled to make. He determined, therefore, to fall back upon the Douro, so as to afford Sir Rowland a point upon which to return, and by uniting their forces to secure a retreat into Portugal.' For this cause, and, as Napier says, 'with a bitter pang,' he raised the siege. A plan of the retreat will be found in Napier, all of which plans (he used to draw them out with pins on a table, and Mrs. Tom, a friend of mine, often helped him) are extremely valuable, adding immeasurably to the value of his work.

Another great military event must not be passed by here. I mean Napoleon's invasion of Russia, though little was heard of it in the valley till late in the year, when all sorts of reports were current. The battle of Moskva, or Borodino, was fought on September 7, in which Napoleon took the field

against Kutusoff. It is said that 240,000 men were engaged, and the carnage was fearful. After this, according to the old Scythian custom—all old Shrewsbury boys will call to mind the words of Herodotus—the Russians retired. Moscow was entered by the French on September 14, when the Russian Governor, Rostopchin, ordered it to be set on fire in 500 places at once. It was evacuated by the French on October 19, and re-entered by the Russians on the 22nd.

'My hopes,' wrote Southey to Neville White, July 29, 'are not very sanguine respecting the war in the North; in Alexander we may calculate upon any degree of folly and of madness, and in his counsellors, upon any baseness. Yet if he would continue to act as he seems to have begun, Bonaparte would rue the day he ever invaded Russia.' And so it came to pass, and on December 18 he reached Paris at half-past eleven at night, bereft of his great army, and sad, but prepared to meet the worst, and to face, or outface, the Parisians. Some readers will call to mind not only the 'March to Moscow,' but Wordsworth's sonnet:—

> But now did the Most High
> Exalt His still small voice; to quell that host
> Gathered his power, a manifest ally;
> He whose heaped waves confounded that proud boast
> Of Pharaoh, said to Famine, Snow, and Frost,
> 'Finish the strife by deadliest victory.'

On November 19 died Nicholas Wanostrocht, LL.D., many years master of the Academy at Camberwell—so putting up with—

> Islanders, whose bliss
> Is to be tossed about from wave to wave.

But what has he to do with these pages? Gentle reader, it was from his Grammar that I learned French, under poor old Seez, *De Sagio*, at Wolverhampton—a kindly man in every sense of the word. It was he who said, when we asked him whether he would rather go to the Evil One than teach little boys—Hal and myself to wit—the elements of his native tongue, 'Sare, I wish no evil to myself nor to any one else, but, of the two, *je pense*, if God Almighty did make the offer, I would rather go to the Evil One, who would

commiserate my sad condition, and release me. *Par Dieu !*' Whereupon he had a spasm, and took some brandy out of a flask for comfort. Poor old Seez, he taught me well, and I knew French early, and it was of much use to me in after-life. In this respect Wolverhampton Free Schools were really in advance of many others. If we will not learn 'tis

To as much end
As give a crutch to the dead.

About this time, my Talking Friend reminded me that the Jerusalem artichoke began to be cultivated on a clay-bank at Hanwood, and grew wonderfully ; a simple corruption of *Girasole*, and as curious as that of *Roumia* by the Arabs, 'the word "Roumia" becoming used by the Arabs as a kind of general term for Europeans, and Europeans, being Christians, grew at length to mean Christian, by much the same process of false logic which has perverted the original meaning of so many words in all languages. Just as in English, for instance, "prevent" once meant "to go before" ; and because a physical hindrance went before and stood in a person's way, the word "prevent" has now acquired the meaning of "to hinder." In India, no one would think of translating the 'Roumi Darwaza' at Lucknow, the Christian Gate, or of calling the palace of the 'Roumi Begum,' at Futtehpore Sikri, near Agra, the palace of the Christian queen ; the term being then applied to Constantinople, still known as Rome, or Roum, from having been the seat of the Second Roman Empire.

In other ways also horticulture and agriculture were still improving, and all the country owed much to Mr. Knight of Downton Castle, who devoted himself to the growth of apples and pears. It was about this time that John Clavering Wood of the 'Marsh,' my uncle, to whom I am indebted, *not* for his estate (which ought to have been mine), but for my love of flowers and a garden (much better, perhaps), went over there to consult with the horticulturist. In the grounds he met a different man, Richard Payne Knight, the editor of 'Homer,' and accosted him, but soon found out that he was not the man he was in search of, however taken with the gardens of Alcinous and so they chatted for a while and parted ; but

all the improvements at the 'Marsh,' and all the planting done there, was the result of this visit.

Meanwhile also there was a steady though slow improvement, throughout the length and breadth of the valley, in the manners of the people. Whatever causes for complaint there were in other portions of the county, there were none here. The demand for labour was good, and every good labourer could command good wages. Much land was drained and cultivation greatly improved. Boggy breadths of ground, the haunts of snipes, and enlivened in the winter months by the plaintive notes of the golden plover, and in the spring and fall by those of the pewit, now began to bear plentiful crops of sweet pasture-grass, and where men could not stand at all but a few years back, cows and cattle of all sorts had a sure footing. And some old Shrewsbury boy would naturally call to mind those lines of Horace which told of Augustus' improvements under Agrippa in the formation of the Julian harbour, and the draining of the Pontine Marshes.

> Debemur morti nos nostraque ; sive, recepta
> Terra Neptuno, classes Aquilonibus arcet,
> Regis opus ; sterilisve diu palus aptaque remis
> Vicinas urbes alit, et grave sentit aratrum ;
> Seu cursum mutavit iniquum frugibus amnis,
> Doctus iter melius.

And so this chapter may be closed, entreating the reader's favour, and calling to his mind the ending of certain old books in days gone by. For example, at the end of the 'Ortus Vocabulorum,' that most curious volume, occur these verses, such as they are, 'Currite igitur Anglici omnes : et parvis ne parcite nummis. Cum poterit parvo : tale volumen emi.' And again, at the end of the 'Catholicon in lingua materna' :—

> Corpus scribentis benedicat lingua legentis.

Certainly the line contains no bad wish for anyone. And Kit Marlowe was right when he said—

> In gentle breasts
> Relenting thoughts remain, and pity rests ;
> And who have hard hearts, and obdurate minds,
> But vicious, base-brain'd, and illiterate kinds ?

CHAPTER LII.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF GEORGE III.

To feel for greatness we must hear it sigh !
E. BULWER LYTTON'S *Poems* :
Last Days of Q. Elizabeth, p. 343.

Dull listener, placed amidst the harmonious whole,
Hear'st thou no voice to sense divinely dark ?
The sweetest sounds that wander to the soul
Are in the unknown language—pause and hark !
Ibid. *Belief*: *the Unknown Language*, p. 52.

It is most true that was anciently spoken, 'A place showeth the man, and it showeth some to the better and some to the worse.' 'Omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset,' saith Tacitus of Galba ; but of Vespasian he saith, 'Solus imperantium Vespasianus mutatus in melius' ; though one was meant of sufficiency, the other of manners and affections.' - LORD BACON'S *Essays* : *Of Great Place*.

Shut up the page, for in its lore
Are fears and doubts unfelt before ;
Fling down the wreath, for sorrow weaves
Amid the laurel cypress leaves.
PRAED'S *Poems* : *The Bridal of Belmont*, i. 172.

I HAVE just read the words following in a popular volume, and I bethought me at once of dear old Hanwood Churchyard :

'Among the oldest of churchyard trees now surviving, I reckon those at Stone, in Kent, and at Selbourne, in Surrey. The old yew-trees helped to furnish bows for the English archers. An Act of Edward I. prohibits any incumbent from cutting down trees in churchyards. This led in later times to *lawning* cemeteries, on the part of incumbents, who would not plant, since they might not cut down. In exposed districts this want of trees has been injurious to the churches. The old churchyard yews furnished weapons to

our soldiers, and armour for the churches themselves against tempests.'

Meanwhile the yew-trees hold their place in our old churchyard, planted there before George III. came to the throne; and the fantastic yews close by my Talking Friend's locality were not displeasing to his Oakship, and he said, 'Aged trees like myself have a reverent regard for antiquity. Years, even in trees, command respect.' Mr. Eastwick, in his 'Journal of a Diplomatic Three Years' Residence in Russia,' speaks of a ride in the Elburz Mountains, and of the 'huge village of Tajrij, when at the tomb of Salih, a nephew of the Imán Riza, is a *chinour*, or plane-tree, the trunk of which is sixty feet in circumference.' Much as the Old Oak disliked planes and poplars, he would have been *pleased* with so magnificent a tree, nor displeased to know that Abbar Kali Mirza 'had often used the bark of willow as a substitute for quinine with excellent effect.' The use of willow-bark has been alluded to before in these pages, and never were finer willows than on the Rea. There they stood in all their glory and in their beauty—

> As stands the stout oak in the poplar wood
> When winds are blowing.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the leaves of the grand old willows in the month of August, glaucous green like the olive. And when I bethink me of the old 'Happy Valley,' as I do daily, I call to mind the lines in E. Bulwer Lytton's poems:

> How oft have I yearn'd for the old happy valley,
> But the sands have no track;
> He who scorned what was near must advance to the far,
> Who forsaketh the landmark must march by the star;
> And the steps that once passed from the peace of the valley,
> Can never come back.

A curious little history, said my Talking Friend, was brought by Pickering the miller from Shrewsbury one Saturday at the beginning of the year. A woman recruit enlisted in the 53rd Regiment, but was discovered. She intended to enlist in the 43rd, having a lover there. A detachment happened to be in the old town at this time.

The winter up to January 17 had been very mild. 'Winter is passing away mildly with us,' writes Southey to C. Wynn, 'and if it were not for our miry soil and bad ways I should not wish for pleasanter weather than January has brought with it; later on, February 27, he writes to Neville White saying that they were visited with 'continued tempests,' and that he had taken to Cumberland clogs, which he wore as long as he was able to walk.

As for the valley of the Rea, it was deluged with repeated floods, and a thick coating of mud was left in the Harrisals and in the Cruckton meadows. Freshets, however, continued to rise, and washed it all away, and the promise of grass and hay was good, and so it turned out. It was during the spring months that the coracle was in constant requisition.

Light boats sail swift, though greater hulks draw deep.

Parliament met on February 2, and presently the Roman Catholic question and the war with America were discussed; but, as usual, these things were not much noticed in the valley. These discussions were followed on the 17th by Sir Samuel Romilly's bill for the amendment of the criminal law. It was on March 26 that he moved the third reading of the bill, which was passed by a majority of 38. As he said, if the old English maxim 'Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari' had been constantly abided by, nothing would have been more defective than our law, which is tangled enough at present. Yet, after all, and notwithstanding the wisdom of it, the bill was rejected by the Lords on April 2 (pity it wasn't the 1st!) by 26 votes against 15. As is well known many of his far-seeing and benevolent motions were at this time rejected.

We have diseases
Which have their true names only ta'en from beasts,
As the most ulcerous wolf and swinish measle.

And we had many diseased laws preying upon our vitals. Happily, since 1813, our code has been purged, though it still needs the knife.

As regards the Roman Catholic question, it may be said, by way of summary, Grattan's motion recommenced the debate, which was continued for four days. The division took

place at four in the morning, after the debate of March 2; and he had a majority of 40, which encouraged him on the 9th to move for a committee of the whole House. Discussions were protracted till May 24, when, influenced by the Speaker, the words 'to sit and vote in either House of Parliament,' in the first clause of the bill, being rejected by a majority of four, the matter ended for the present, Mr. Grattan giving a notice on the 31st that he should bring in his bill again. We all of us know how long those discussions lasted, and how it is a *quæstio vexata* even yet—the very bane of Ireland, and England's great distress; and I bethought me of those old lines of Lucretius, which I give in Mr. Munro's recension:—

> Denique ut in fabrica, si pravast regula prima,
> Normaque si fallax rectis regionibus exit,
> Et libella aliqua si ex parti claudicat hilum,
> Omnia mendose fieri atque obstipa necesse est.
> Prava cubantia prona supina atque absona tecta,
> Jam ruere ut quædam videantur velle, ruantque
> Prodita justiciis fallacibus omnia primis,
> Sic igitur ratio tibi rerum prava necescit
> Falsaque sit, falsis quæcumque ab sensibus ortast.

We may indeed add, in words which presently follow, our contention with the Romanist is a *ratio scruposa*, a gravelling question; and then, as to matters of law generally, every native Irishman will hold to the Brehon code, declining to understand all English legislation.

But to descend to lower concerns, whether local or other.

It was necessary this March to draw off the upper coppice pool at Hanwood, owing to the depredations of the great water-beetle and other vermin on the spawn of Dr. Tench. Quantities of sticklebacks also would build their nests there—an exceptional case in the fish tribe—and small as they are, they are not only voracious but pugnacious also. This curious fact had not escaped the notice of so good a naturalist as Mr. Lloyd, in his 'Scandinavian Adventures.'

It is remarkable that there came no rain to fill the pond here referred to till April 28, when there was a great snow-

fall, and it continued raining, more or less, all through the month of May.

At the end of March this year some fine salmon were taken in the Severn and in the Verniew, but were not sold at the apprentice-price, which has been alluded to before in an earlier page. They were sold at 3*s.* 6*d.*, 4*s.*, and even at 4*s.* 6*d.* per pound.

In allusion to the old apprentice-indentures Selden says in his 'Table Talk': 'If a servant that has been fed with good beef goes into that part of England where salmon is plenty, at first he is pleased with his salmon, and despises his beef; but after he has been there awhile, he grows weary of his salmon, and wishes for his good beef again. We have awhile been much taken up with the prayers by the spirit, but in time we may grow weary of it, and wish for our Common Prayer'—one of his many striking applications.

I may call the reader's attention here to the former abundance of salmon in Brittany: 'Pontaven is celebrated for the quantity of its salmon; so much is taken, that it used to be said that the millers fattened their pigs upon this fish, which was literally true, as they took the small salmon, called *glévils*, in nets (*poches*) for that purpose. Salmon now is very dear. At the mouth of the Pontaven river was a castle, whose proprietor had the privilege of forcing upon the fishing boats which returned up the river without giving to the castellan their finest fish, which his steward went down to rebut.' Brittany was the town of millers:

> Pont-Aven, ville de renom:
> Quatorze moulins, deux maisons.

The salmon that were taken in the Severn in my boyhood were seldom large ones, rarely over twenty pounds. Now that our rivers are looked to it is probable the weight will be greater. The numbers are already very much increased at Shrewsbury, Worcester, and Gloucester.

Meanwhile, letters came to Hawkstone, and the news was soon bruited through the country that Sir Rowland Hill was at his post, and that operations in the Peninsula were commencing. The battle of Castalla, previous to which Napier

tells of the almost Homeric duel between two captains of Grenadiers, was fought on April 13. 'The ground,' says this graphic historian, 'had an abrupt declination, which enabled the French to form line under cover close to the British, who were lying down in wait for the moment of charging. A Grenadier officer seized the occasion to advance and challenge Waldron, also captain of Grenadiers, to a duel. The agile, vigorous Irishman instantly leaped forward, the hostile lines looked on, the swords of the champions glittered in the sun, the Frenchman's head was cleft in twain, and the 27th, rising up with a deafening shout, fired a deadly volley and charged with such a shock that, maugre their bravery and numbers, Suchet's men were overthrown, and the side of the Sierra was covered with killed and wounded. Murray erroneously attributed this brilliant exploit to Colonel Adam, but it was both the design and the work of Colonel Reeves.'

Early in the year Southey wrote to Neville White, saying he thought that the 'catastrophe of the bloody drama' with the Corsican was coming to an end, adding: 'There can be no peace with Bonaparte, none with France, that is not dictated at the edge of the sword. Peace, I trust, is now not far distant, and one which France must kneel to receive than England to ask.' And yet, nothing created a greater astonishment to all Europe than the successful efforts of Napoleon to retrieve his retreat from Russia; 'although,' says the writer of the 'Annual Register,' 'he must have been sensible that his advance from the Saale to the Oder was a series of hard-fought battles, in which his best troops were gradually melting away.' The battle of Bautzen on May 20, and that of Wurtzen on the 21st, compelled the allied army to recross the Oder, and led to an armistice, but not to a peace. The armistice was ratified on July 4, and the term of it was fixed to the 20th, six days' notice being agreed upon for the recommencement of hostilities. A convention was signed at Neumarkt to prolong it till August 10. But all was hollowness.

Old associations in the county still induced it to look to the memory of Charles I. with a sort of reverence, so that when a report was spread in Shrewsbury that Sir Henry Halford had published an account of the opening of his

coffin, in the vault of Henry VIII. at Windsor—it was on April 28—many made pointed remarks, and thought it did not become either the Prince Regent, who was present, or others who assisted. Some said that old Justice Smith, who had been stopped by the Mayor at Stratford-upon-Avon, a remarkable character whom I well remember, repeated these lines from Shakespeare's gravestone there, an epitaph so well known to us all :

> Good frend, for Jesu's sake forbeare
> To digg the dust enclosed here ;
> Blest be the man that spares these stones,
> And curst be he that moves my bones.

Feeling people do not like to tread upon a grave, much less to disturb one. The lines following are said to be Coleridge's :

> To see a man tread over graves
> I hold it no good mark ;
> 'Tis wicked in the sun and moon,
> And bad luck in the dark.

Somewhere about this time it was that the Staffordshire potters as they passed under the Old Tree with their tickney-ware (the old local term) told marvellous accounts of one Ann Moore, the fasting woman of Tetbury. My Talking Friend said he could not live without the dews of earth and nourishment from the earth, and he thus foreconcluded her to be an impostor. The Oak was wise, and she turned out to be so. Old John Diggory, wag and humourist combined, used to say, when they told the story to him, that the world was full of men and women impostors—more of the latter, he would add, being something of a misogynist—and old Evans, the blacksmith, and Dikky Tummas of the Lea Cross—'rum devils,' in ancient phrase, like himself—veritably declared that he repeated some strange lines, which, as far as my Talking Friend remembered, were to this intent :

> The world of fools hath such a store,
> That he who would not see an ass
> Must bide at home and bolt the door,
> And break his looking-glass.

Old John Diggory, often mentioned before in these pages

and by me remembered well, was a bachelor to his dying day—perhaps, after all, not so much a misogynist as one who had been deceived by women—prepared, had he known it, to have said with Posthumus in 'Cymbeline,' in his indignation and in resentment of Imogen's supposed heartless behaviour:

> Is there no way for men to be, but women
> Must be half-workers?

We all recollect how Milton said, unhappy in his wedded life, and yet ready as Adam to forgive Eve her 'frailty and infirmer sex':

> Oh! why did God,
> Creator wise, that peopled highest heaven
> With spirits masculine, create at last
> This novelty on earth, this fair defect
> Of Nature, and not fill the world at once
> With men, as angels, without feminine,
> Or find some other way to generate
> Mankind?

All of which long yarn is spun out of Ann Moore, the fasting impostor of Tetbury, so well remembered by my Talking Friend, who liked

> Good days, good deeds, and longings after good.

I may just add in passing that these tickney-ware men above mentioned had been at Upton-on-Severn, and brought word to Shrewsbury that there had been a sad loss of life there by the upsetting of a boat, all through an act of carelessness and recklessness. It was true enough, and five lives were lost, as may be seen in the Chronicle of the 'Annual Register.'

As relates to the valley of the Rea, it may be noted that there was a wonderful potato crop this year. Tubers planted on March 1 were dug up June 20, and in wonderful perfection on the 27th. From this date to the present time root crops have taken quite a different place in agricultural statistics. Who knew anything of the mangel-wurzel in the year 1813, or for many years after that? Whereas now, in 1868, it is a staple crop, and one of the most remunerating put into the ground by the farmer. The question now is, What could we do without it? And yet, like the potato, it now and then

gives us warning, and, notwithstanding its broad expanse of leaf, tells us it has its parasite. But we must sow on as we hope to reap. It never does to be alarmists :

> Like the presaging raven that tolls
> The sick man's passport in his hollow beak,
> And in the shadow of the silent night
> Doth shake contagion from his sable wings.

In these days, added my Talking Friend, every one that could, began to ride a better horse, and the fox-hounds and the adjoining pack of harriers at Cruckton, kept neighbours together. Evidently a better breed of horses succeeded the old hackster, and the demand for horses in the Peninsula obtained for the farmers who bred them more remunerating prices. And thus the old county continued a sporting county still, and the valley of the Rea still re-echoed with 'the hunt's up,' and the huntsman's horn. And I bethought me of Antonio's words in the 'Duchess of Malfi' : 'As out of the Grecian horse issued many famous princes ; so, out of brave horsemanship arise the first sparks of growing resolution, that raise the mind to noble action.' Few, even amongst scholars, know how valuable are Xenophon's small treatises, 'De Re Equestri,' and 'De Venatione,' and how he always hits the right nail upon the head, himself a country gentleman in his latter days and a good sportsman. The Iron Duke thought Eton and the hunting field the best of schools ; and so that Grecian soldier in his lovely retreat at Scillus, where he resided twenty years, and of which he has left a description.

The mention of the need of horses for the Peninsula reminds me that it was about midsummer this year—indeed, on June 21—that the battle of Vitoria, or Vittoria, as we more usually spell it, was fought—that battle which, Napier said, virtually decided the fate of Spain—the march towards which Lord Wellington commenced about the middle of May. What, however, made the account of it doubly interesting in the valley of the Rea and in the old county was this, that Sir Rowland Hill not only commenced operations, but followed up the retreating army, thus adding to the bright wreath of laurel which already encircled his honest brow. Southey, in his interesting account of the situation of this city, states that

'it is remarkable that the Prince of Brazil, before the battle of Vittoria was fought, should have conferred the title of Duque da Victoria upon Lord Wellington.' The account of the battle must be read in the historians. The French, says Napier, escaped with comparatively little loss of men, but, to use Gazan's words: 'They lost all their equipages, all their guns, all their treasure, all their stores, all their papers; so that no man could prove even how much pay was due to him; generals and subordinate officers alike were reduced to the clothes on their backs, and most of them were bare-footed. Never was an army more hardly used by its commander, for the soldiers were not half-beaten, and yet never was a victory more complete.'

It was in July—the 25th—that the first unsuccessful attempt was made on St. Sebastian—unsuccessful because the Duke's orders were not carried out. It was attended with severe loss; 49 officers, writes Napier, and no less than 520 men; or, taking the allies in the gross, the loss was '1,300 soldiers and seamen, exclusive of Spaniards, during Mendizabel's blockade.'

It was necessary, however, that St. Sebastian should be taken so as to keep open our sea communication, and so operations were renewed the beginning of August. The assault, nevertheless, was not made till the 31st, when the morning broke heavily and with a thick fog. It was amongst the most dreadful frays of this flood of war, and after the breach had been won, a thunderstorm, coming down from the mountains with unbounded fury immediately after the place was carried, added to the confusion of the fight. The reader is referred to Napier for the horrible barbarities which ensued, and which, it is to be hoped, were exaggerated. After the capture of the town 'the steep and rugged Monte Orgullo, with its citadel, remained to be assailed.' This was not surrendered till September 9, and the Governor behaved nobly from first till last. Thus fell St. Sebastian, called by Lord Keith the northern Gibraltar of Spain.

Meanwhile, in our own country, things were more promising, and the weather was such as suited the wheat crops. Throughout the valley of the Rea everything looked

well, and in due season the kindly fruits of the earth were gathered in, and there was a bounteous harvest. As usual, a great wheat year is a great acorn year, and my Talking Friend's branches were so loaded that it was a sight to see them glistening in the sun. 'The pebbles on the hungry beach' were scarcely more thick set.

It was somewhere about this time—in the month of September—that Welshmen from Merioneth, on their way to Shrewsbury, spoke of the fall of a great oak there, well known to all the Cymry, and my Talking Friend was much interested in the account they gave of it. Certainly he would not have it said of himself, as Falstaff said, 'It is the disease of not listening, the malady of not mastering, that I am troubled withal.' The following extract from the 'Annual Register' alludes, no doubt, to the oak the Welshmen told of on their way. 'The venerable oak, generally known by the name of Cybren-yr-Ellyl, near Marmion, in Merioneth, fell lately under the weight of age. It appears from 'Pennant's Tour' that it must have been old even in the days of Owen Glendower, who hid in this tree the body of the Lancastrian, Howel Sale, near 400 years ago.' Howel Sale has been alluded to before in these pages.

It was in this year that the Ranters began to preach on the side of Ponsert Hill, originally introduced, I think, from Wales. At the same time, it is remarkable that extempore preaching, as it is called, began to increase—probably with no great increase of edification. A little later I recollect to have heard a Dr. Whitaker at Wolverhampton, the first extempore preacher I ever heard—a venerable man in appearance, and of high repute. Bishop Hall always penned his sermons carefully, and so did Bishop Andrews. It was the latter who said that whenever he preached twice the same day he *prated* once. The anecdote of Sanderson and Hammond is well known.

The battle of Leipzic, in which Napoleon commanded the French army, was fought about the middle of October, and was one of the bloodiest and most decisive of the time, and from that defeat he may be said never to have recovered. Immediately afterwards the Emperors of Austria and Russia,

the King of Prussia, and the Crown Prince of Sweden, entered the city. It was after this battle that old Blucher received his bâton as field-marshal. It was not till November 2 that Napoleon reached Mentz in safety, and with his old bold front.

Dehinc omnia fatis
In pejus ruere, ac retro sublapsa referri.

But to return to the affairs of the Peninsula, which must be reported here, as the whole county was so interested in by General Hill, the soldier of all others so implicitly trusted by the Duke of Wellington. Brave, prudent, cautious, he knew by intuition that

We may outrun
By violent swiftness that which we run at,
And lose by over-running ;

and he was therefore to be trusted in all matters of difficulty, and when once the Duke knew that Hill was at his post, allowing, as a great general would, for all the fortunes of war, he knew that he was safe—

By intelligence
And proof as clear as founts in Italy, when
We see each grain of gravel.

It was on October 7 that the Duke crossed the Bidassoa, 'a river not otherwise remarkable than as forming the boundary of two great kingdoms,' are Southey's words, but which we might call the modern Rubicon. On the day just mentioned Wellington entered France, and from that day fortune never frowned upon him. The contest must be read in the historians, from whom it will be seen how the Duke outgeneralled Soult, 'to whom it appeared so unlikely,' says Napier, 'that a general, leaving a better line of operations on his right, should attempt to pass the Bidassoa at its mouth, that he was completely deceived,' and his lieutenants negligent.

Ardua dum metuunt, amittunt vera viai.

Passing over other smaller matters of warfare, the battle of the Nivelle must be referred to, as the Duke 'had removed Hill from the Roncevalles to the Baston, with a view to attack Soult.' The battle, which was to have commenced on

November 8, did not take place till the 10th, owing to Freyre's being unprovisioned—an untoward circumstance, and made the most of on his part. Like others at this time the Nivelle was a fierce fight, 'and Soult was driven in a few hours from a mountain position which he had been fortifying for three months.' For particulars the reader must be referred to Napier and his 'Observations,' always shrewd and soldier-like. It was in this battle that Lieutenant Edward Freer fell, young of days, but full of scars. 'He was only nineteen, and had seen more combats and sieges than he could count years. So slight in person, and of such surpassing and delicate beauty, that the Spaniards often thought him a girl disguised in man's clothing. He was yet so vigorous, so active, so brave, that the most daring and experienced veterans watched his looks on the field of battle, and implicitly following where he led, would, like children, obey his slightest sign in the most difficult situations. His education was incomplete, yet were his natural powers so happy that the keenest and best furnished intellects shrank from an encounter of wit; and every thought and aspiration was proud and noble, indicating future greatness, if destiny had so willed it. Such was Edward Freer of the 43rd. The night before the battle he had that strange anticipation of coming death so often felt by military men; he was struck with three balls at the storming of the Rhune rocks, and the sternest soldiers wept, even in the middle of the fight, when they saw him fall.'

No one will think the less of soldiers who fell in the ranks on reading such a tribute as this, only to be surpassed, if surpassed, by a similar one in the very next page. 'On the same day and at the same hour was killed Colonel Thomas Lloyd. He, likewise, had been a long time in the 43rd. Under him Freer had learned the rudiments of his profession; but in the course of the war promotion placed Lloyd at the head of the 94th, and it was leading that regiment he fell. In him also were combined mental and bodily powers of no ordinary kind. Graceful symmetry, herculean strength, and a countenance frank and majestic, gave the true index of his nature; for his capacity was great and commanding, and his military knowledge extensive, both from experience and

study. Of his mirth and wit, well known in the army, it only need be said that he used the latter without offence, yet so as to increase his ascendency over those with whom he had intercourse; for, though gentle, he was ambitious, valiant, and conscious of fitness for great exploits. And he, like Freer, was prescient of and predicted his own fall, but with no abatement of courage; for when he received the mortal wound, a most painful one, he would not suffer himself to be moved, and remained to watch the battle, making observations on its changes until death came. It was thus, at the age of thirty, that the good, the brave, the generous Lloyd died. Tributes to his merit have been published by Wellington and by one of his own poor soldiers—by the highest and by the lowest! To their testimony I add mine; let those who served on equal terms with him say whether in aught it has exaggerated his deserts.'

And I bethought me of Tennyson's lines in the 'Day Dream':—

> He gazes on the silent dead,
> They perished in their daring deeds;
> The proverb flashes through his head,
> 'The many fall: the one succeeds.'

From December 9 to 13 all was fighting, as the passage of the Nive was absolutely necessary. The battle of St. Pierre, on the 13th, was 'agreed,' says Napier, 'by French and English to have been one of the most desperate in the whole war. Wellington said he had never seen a field so thickly strewn with dead; nor can the vigour of the combatants be well denied, when 5,000 men were killed or wounded in three hours upon a space of one mile square.' It was in this action that Hill was placed in such imminent danger, for which the Duke has been blamed; but each knew his man, and our Shropshire hero's glory was complete. Napier's concluding observations must find their place here. 'Hill's employment of his reserve was a fine stroke. He saw that the misconduct of the two colonels would cause the loss of his position more surely than any direct attack upon it, and with military decision he descended at once to the spot, playing the soldier as well as the general, rallying the 71st, and leading the reserve

himself, trusting meanwhile with a noble and well-placed confidence to the courage of the 92nd and the 50th to sustain the fight at St. Pierre. He knew, indeed, the 6th division was then close at hand, and the battle might be fought over again; but, like a thorough soldier, he was resolved to win his own fight with his own troops if he could; and he did so after a manner that in less eventful times would have rendered him the hero of a nation.'

Such was Napier's estimate of Hill.

On December 17 died, at the Marsh, Colonel William Wood, my maternal grandfather, long a resident in Hanwood, and a great friend to the people, where his remains lie. He has been often mentioned in these pages as a man of much and varied information. He sailed for India as a cadet on March 14, 1769; was through the Rohilla wars, and saw much service; and was looked upon highly by all in office and command. He was a fearful Whig, but of the most kindly disposition, and full of anecdote; one of whom it might be truly said, 'He lived beloved, and died regretted.'

> He nothing human alien deems
> Unto himself, nor disesteems
> Man's meanest claim upon him;
> And when he walks, the mere sunbeams
> Drop blessings on him.

Somewhat irascible, but easily appeased, his voice might be heard ringing through the dell, and the columbines that grew there in clusters bowed their dove-like heads, as though in submission. A great reader, and the personal friend of Jonathan Scott, the old Persian interpreter, who lived in Quarry Place, Shrewsbury, hard by that magnificent cedar of Lebanon which has been lately so injured by winds, and wickedly cut, week after week he might be seen trudging back from the old town with as many books as he could carry from the library, where his old friend Miss Eddowes supplied him well, and looked for his visits. Such were

> Those old simple days, before merit went
> To gather unseen harm and discontent
> Along with all the alien merchandise
> That rich folk need, too restless to be wise.

Before he left Hanwood for the Marsh, where he ended his days, he used to be much amused to see the rabbits scuttling up and down the wood opposite to his house, just over the Rea. Oddly enough, till within a year or two, rabbits, so common elsewhere, were scarce here ; but about that time a number were obtained and turned out here and at the Oaks. On the latter property the increase was marvellous, and they became a most irregular nuisance, and the old woods there might have been called a 'Coneygarth.' Who would have thought that once upon a time the fields adjoining the Lincoln's Inn were called the Coneygarth? There, however, from out of the Middlesex Forest which reached as far as Highgate and Hampstead, they might have been seen by scores,

> Though hardly yet the sparrows had begun
> To twitter o'er the coming of the sun.

Late in December the valley of the Rea was all in a mist, and it has been noted that an extraordinary fog enveloped London and the country for many miles round at the same time. 'There has been no instance of such a fog,' says the writer in the 'Annual Register,' 'as this week pervaded the metropolis, extending many miles round, since the earthquake at Lisbon in November 1755. On Saturday afternoon the obscurity was greater than it had been at all during the day-time since its commencement.' The course of the Rea, said my Talking Friend, was lined with a light blue mist for a long time, and wisps of snipes, with their peculiar note, seemed to be passing and repassing continually. I have never myself heard what has been called the 'drumming' of the snipe ; the common note is very different from this, and is heard when they are flushed.

Taking the year as a whole, things were in a more satisfactory position, although the questions of the Princess of Wales, the Roman Catholic discussions, and the establishment, or rather the revival, of Orange Lodges, fanned the flames of dissension. Happily, the fine summer and the bounteous harvest, which so reduced the price of provisions, gave a happy turn to affairs, and the unhealthy restlessness of the people began to subside. The demand,

likewise, for manufactured goods, owing to French restrictions, raised the wages of that class, and the Luddites lost their hold.

It may be added that wheat, which in March was 122*s.* 8*d.* per quarter, came down in December to 73*s.* 6*d.*; barley, from 68*s.* 2*d.* to 42*s.* 11*d.*; and oats, from 44*s.* 6*d.* to 27*s.* 7*d.* And so at Christmas there was no need for anyone to go with a long face, but each had cause to praise God and to be thankful, and might listen, if he would, to the Devil's knell, of which an old Bridgewater 'Times' gives the following account:—'At Dewsbury a bell is tolled on Christmas Eve, as at a funeral, or in the manner of a passing-bell; and anyone asking whose bell it was would be told it was the Devil's knell. The moral of this is that the Devil died when Christ was born. The custom was discontinued for many years, but was revived by the Vicar in 1828. Among the sweet bells of Dewsbury is the famous "Black Tom of Tothill," which is said to have been an expiatory gift for a murder.'

And so it is that names and customs are retained. Referring even to the word 'Tothill' just mentioned, we are reminded of the modern 'Tooters' in watering-places. 'The name of Tot,' says Mr. Timbs in his 'London and Westminster,' 'is the old British word "tent,"' &c.

But, all things come to an end, and so does the year 1813, when I was at school with a kind hearted man, the Reverend William Case, on Claremont Hill, Shrewsbury; and I always refer to the dear old town with pleasure, and visit it with fresh delight—to say nothing of the valley of the Rea, which I return to annually, and to the old homestead, like the hare to her form, as Xenophon says in that clever treatise 'De Venatione'—'Ἀγαπῶν τοὺς τόπους, ἐν οἷς ἐγένετο καὶ ἐτράφη. It is hardly well with anyone who loveth not the home of hi childhood. Very touching are those lines of Sir Edwar Bulwer Lytton's 'Constance':

> One home there is from which, howe'er we stray,
> True as a star, the smile pursues our way;
> The home of thoughtful childhood's mystic tears,
> Of earliest Sabbath-bells on sinless ears,
> Of noonday dreamings under summer trees,

And prayers first murmur'd at a mother's knees.
Ah ! happy he whose later home as man
Is made where love first spoke and hope began,
Where haunted floors dear footsteps back can give,
And in our Lares all our fathers live !

At the commencement of the year 1814 the military movements in the Peninsula were of the greatest interest, as leading step by step to the dissolution of Napoleon's power ; and news was greedily sought for throughout the whole limits of the valley. Perhaps no intelligence excited more interest than Marshal Blucher's passage of the Rhine, for he had acquired a great name, and even now the *sobriquet* of 'Marshal Forvärts' attached to him, and from this time till the Battle of Waterloo he never lost it. Some may recollect the lines of Southey in his 'Carmina Aulica,' on the visit of his Majesty Frederic William the Fourth, King of Prussia.

Six weeks in daily strife
The veteran Blucher bore the brunt of war,
Glorious old man !
The last and greatest of his master's school,
Long may he live to hear
The people bless his name !
Late be it ere the wreath
That crowns his silver hair
Adorn his monument !
Glorious old man,
How oft hath he discomfited
The boasted chiefs of France,
And foiled her vaunting tyrant's desperate rage !
Glorious old man,
Who from Silesia's fields,
O'er Elbe, and Rhine, and Seine,
From victory to victory marching on,
Made his heroic way ; till at the gates
Of Paris, open'd by his arms, he saw
His king triumphant stand.

But what interested the old county most was the news from France, where Sir Rowland Hill was now, as usual, to the front, and always trusted by Lord Wellington when hard work was to be done.

The winter of 1814 was one of the most severe ones on

record, and I remember it well, for the Rea was frozen over, and our fishing-boat frozen in. The coracle, being portable, was safely housed in the stables. By the steps on the stream, where the women went for water, we children had made a great hole (which we had to break fresh each morning), and there the minnows came by hundreds for air. In truth,

> The pools
> And water-courses had become dead streaks
> Of steely ice. The rushes in the creeks
> Stood stiff as iron spikes. The sleety breeze
> Itself had died for lack of aught to tease,
> On the great oaks, or pine-trees numb'd and stark.

The frost commenced on December 27, 1813, with a thick fog, followed by heavy falls of snow throughout the kingdom. It lasted till February 5, and it was on the 7th that in London the people heard the rain pelting down their chimney-pots and rejoiced. My Talking Friend, however, doubted much if it was really gone, for by night he heard the constant creaking of wild-fowls' wings flying backwards, as if from Marton Pools to the shallows on the Severn, and almost said, in the words of the kindly fool in 'Lear'—

> Winter's not gone yet if the wild-geese fly that way.

A report reached the valley, brought by the people coming from market, that many soldiers had been frozen to death on their way to Shrewsbury, which was true enough, as may be seen in the 'Annual Register' Chronicle, under January 15. By the 17th the Severn was frozen over at Gloucester, and people going to Tewkesbury market rode across the ice on horseback, at the Lode, near that place. By the 21st the same river was quite frozen over at Shrewsbury, and was covered with skaters.

The fall of snow in some places had been great beyond the recollection of the oldest men living. At Plymouth it was said to have been full twenty inches, and the Exeter roads were quite impassable. Nor was the frost less intense in the North, at Edinburgh and Glasgow. As for the Solway Frith, it was quite filled with blocks and hommocks of ice, such as, no doubt, I have more than once seen in the Sound when the Baltic was frozen over from Copenhagen to Sweden,

and, as we sledged on the ice, the lines of Virgil were literally true:

> Concrescunt subitæ currenti in flumine crustæ,
> Undaque jam tergo ferratos sustinet orbes,
> Puppibus illa prius patulis, nunc hospita plaustris.

Nor was the Emerald Isle unvisited, for on January 25 as many as 1,700 bags of letters were due in Dublin from the provinces.

The great frosts of 1684, 1688, and 1740 have been alluded to before in these pages, and the reader is referred to Mr. Timbs' 'Blanket and Frost Fairs on the Thames' in his 'London and Westminster.' It is in the last of these fairs that 'one Hodgson, a butcher in Saint James's Market, claimed the privilege of killing or knocking down the ox' (to be roasted on the Thames), 'as a right inherent in his family, his father having knocked down the ox roasted on the river in the great frost of 1684, as himself did in 1715, near Hungerford Stairs: Hodgson to wear a laced cambric apron, a silver-handled steel, and a hat and feathers.' And, in truth, the lines which soon follow those quoted from the 'Characters and Chronicles,' a little above, may be literally inserted here:

> That winter you might hold
> A hundred fairs, and roast a hundred sheep,
> If you could find them, on the ice, so deep
> The frost had fixed his floors on driven piles.

I may add from the amusing book above alluded to that a duodecimo volume entitled 'Frostiana; or, a History of the River Thames in a Frozen State, and an Account of the late Severe Frost &c., to which is added the Art of Skating,' was printed and published on the ice on the Thames, February 5, 1814. The title-page was worked on a large ice-island between Blackfriars and Westminster Bridges. Luke Clennell, the Northumberland painter, sketched the above Frost Fair from near London Bridge. The following lines were likewise issued from the printing-press, no doubt, with Jack Frost's *privilege*:

> You that walk here, and do design to tell
> Your children's children what this year befell,

Come, buy this print, and then it will be seen
That such a year as this hath seldom been!

My Talking Friend said that he felt his old bark crack under the pressure of the frost, as he had done in those other hard winters.

It will be noted from the Chronicle to the 'Annual Register': 'By accounts from Archangel of June 17, we learn that the last winter had made greater inroads into the summer of that northern latitude than ever had been known in the memory of man. The ice of the Dwina had not broke up till May 24, and even in the middle of June the White Sea was full of drift ice. No ships had arrived at Archangel from foreign parts,' &c. And so much for this biting winter, so well remembered even yet.

Old John Diggory, so often mentioned, was in London to see his sister just after the frost broke up, and he brought word back to the valley how he had seen the great fire at the Custom House, the details of which he gave at the 'Lea Cross,' on condition that Dikky Tummas would not mix his beer. It broke out at about a quarter after six on February 12, and was attended by such losses as were never ascertained. Old John greatly regretted the loss of the Long Room, which he had been to see, and thought it the finest room in the world. The present Long Room is 190 feet in length, 66 wide, and between 30 and 40 high. Good, kindly reader, the following is from Mr. Timbs' 'Curiosities of London,' and

If this be worth your hearing,
Mark it.

'The present is the fifth Custom House built nearly upon the same site. The *first* was erected by John Churchman, Sheriff of London in 1385 (Stow). The *second* was built in the reign of Elizabeth, and appears in the 1543 view of London, with several high-pitched gables and a water-gate; it was burnt in the great fire of 1666. It was rebuilt by Wren, at a cost of 10,000*l.*; and this *third* house was consumed by fire in 1718, and was the only one of Wren's buildings that in his long life was destroyed. Wren's Custom

House was replaced by Ripley, who introduced the Long Room, and embellished the river front with Ionic columns, pediments, and a Tuscan colonnade. This *fourth* house was burnt in 1814,' as above recorded. The Thames front of the present building was erected by Sir Robert Smirke.

Poor old John Diggory! There was one person who frequented the 'Lea Cross,' whom he could not put up with—one Winifrid Hughes, who, when he was what is now called 'chaffed,' and put out of temper, relieved himself by constant spitting, like the sea hares (*Aplysia*) of the Formosa Sea. Strange that one recollects such trifles! Perhaps the line in Juvenal refers to the same dirty habit:

Qui Lacedæmonium pytismate lubricat orbem.

Clearly old John did not like Winifrid Hughes or his habits, and he spoke of him in terms like those used by Kent of the steward in 'Lear,' as of a man not to be trusted—'a lily-livered, action-taking knave.'

Meanwhile the old county was in daily expectation of news from the Peninsula; and in due time it came, though later on. In fact, the accounts of the passing of the Adour and of the battle of Orthez came together, and Sir Rowland Hill, as usual, was to the fore. The passing of the Adour is called by Napier 'that stupendous undertaking which must always rank amongst the prodigies of war.' Nothing ever more excited English soldiery; and at the time I write these lines—September 21, 1868—I have an old parishioner living whose eyes still glisten as he tells the tale—Henry Ball, of Heene, to wit—the same who with his fellows unlocked the doors at Badajos with bullets. It was this same old worthy who told me that most of the people round about thought there was but one 'Adur' in the world, and that was at Shoreham.

And I called to mind Southey's words: 'Adour, like Gave, is a name common to many rivers in the Pyrenees, both simply meaning water, in some of those primeval languages the remains of which are still widely preserved in the appellations of rivers and mountains. Another instance in the Saxon term is that of the little river of the valley 'THE REA'—simply meaning water, as in 'READING'—those low

grounds, or '*rags*,' on the water's side, dwelt upon before in these pages.

The battle of Orthes—the capital of the Senechalry of the same name—was fought on February 27, the action commencing about nine in the morning, and was a desperate fight from first till last ; but for details—as to how Sir Rowland Hill forced the passage of the Gave, and how he was as earnest in pursuit as in the field in Shropshire ; and how Soult fought so bravely, and how his soldiers came fairly to the bayonet, but could not stand the cold steel ; and how, last, but not least, Lord Wellington was struck in the pommel of his sword by a musket-shot, 'and bruised so severely by the blow that he was unable to cross this intersected country on horseback time enough to direct the further movements of the divisions in pursuit'—for these and other matters the reader is referred to our historians.

Meanwhile a great change was coming over the scene, and the fortunes of Bonaparte were rapidly on the decline, nor could he say any more with Eleazar in Marlowe's words :

> This glory round about me hath thrown beams ;
> I have stood upon the top of Fortune's wheel,
> And backward turn'd the iron screw of fate.
> The destinies have spun a silken thread
> About my life.

It was, indeed, at this very time that private communications had been received from Bordeaux, and Lord Wellington was acting upon them with his usual caution, even when the Duc d'Angoulême visited his headquarters at St.-Sever, communicating to him how the writ to restore the Bourbons had reached him from Toulouse.

Still doubtful if Bonaparte would receive the conditions of peace offered him, he acquiesced in Rochejaquelein's proposition to precede Marshal Beresford and the English on his way to Bordeaux by six-and-thirty hours, and the marshal was now on his way over those dreary and almost interminable wastes called the Landes, where he arrived on March 12, and was met by the mayor and magistrates, who assumed the white cockade, the badge of the Bourbons.

It is because our county hero is concerned in all these

matters that they are mentioned here. Referring the reader to our historians, it will be enough here to mention a few facts summarily.

On March 30 the allies entered Paris, where Napoleon would otherwise have been, having moved his army from Troyes, by Sens, towards Fontainebleau. On his arrival at Fromont he heard of the decision of the Senate, and retired to Corbeil, and thence to Fontainebleau, whence he sent to abdicate in favour of his son. This was refused, and on April 4 he abdicated in the terms following :

'The allied Powers having proclaimed that the Emperor Napoleon was the only obstacle to the re-establishment of the peace of Europe, the Emperor Napoleon, faithful to his oath, declares that he renounces, for himself and heirs, the thrones of France and Italy ; and that there is no personal sacrifice, even to that of life, which he is not ready to make for the interests of France.' Shrewdly and cleverly worded, and by one who knew the character of the people, and anticipated their flocking to his standard once more, should fortune smile ; and then, perfidious Albion, 'Have at thee with a downright blow, as Bevis of Southampton fell upon Ascaparte !'

Meanwhile—for there was no telegraph in those days to flash and fire intelligence, and to put a girdle upon space and time, surpassing what the Chorus in 'Henry V.' calls

The quick forge and working-house of thought—

meanwhile the bloody dance of war was not complete in all its figures, and more lives were to be sacrificed at Toulouse, near to which Soult was born, and knew the country well, so that he was on advantageous ground. The battle was fought on April 10, on Easter Sunday ('long will that Easter Sunday,' says Southey, 'be remembered at Toulouse') ; and the victory, though sometimes claimed by French writers, was clearly with the English. Napier's account is quite conclusive.

It was not till the evening of the 11th that Lord Wellington received from Paris intelligence of the events which occurred there on the 7th, and so it was 'a lamentable

spilling of blood and a useless,' says Napier, 'for before this period Napoleon had abdicated the throne of France, and a provisional government was constituted at Paris.'

It has been said, but without truth, that Soult knew of the negotiations and of Napoleon's abdication; for, after the passing of the Reform Bill, on the accusation being repeated by Lord Aberdeen, 'the Duke of Wellington rose on the instant and emphatically declared that Marshal Soult did not know, and that it was impossible he could know, of the Emperor's abdication when he fought the battle.' But even this testimony has been questioned. It was so on Soult's visit to England, of all times the most improper to have raised the question afresh. But John Bull was not to be scared out of his ancient hospitalities, and the veteran heard the English huzzas of peace, as he had heard them shouting for the battle.

> Such a noise arose
> As the shrouds make at sea in a stiff tempest,
> As loud, and to as many tunes.

Again may we be permitted to regret that the telegraph was not in existence prior to the sally of Bayonne on April 14—a sad and melancholy finale, in which our troops all but met with a disastrous reverse, and 'misfortune and suffering fell,' in Napier's words, 'upon one of the brightest soldiers of the British army,'—that is, on Hope. 'Pushing for Etienne by a hollow road, a shot struck him in the arm, and his horse, a large one, as was necessary to sustain the gigantic warrior, received eight bullets and fell upon his leg. His followers had by this time escaped from the defile; yet two of them, Captain Herries and Mr. Moore, a nephew of Sir John Moore, seeing his helpless state, turned back, and endeavoured amidst the heavy fire of the enemy to draw him from beneath his horse. While thus engaged they were both struck down with dangerous wounds; the French carried them all off, and Hope was again severely hurt in the foot by an English bullet before they reached the citadel. A few days after this piteous event, the convention made with Soult became known, and hostilities ceased.'

And thus, with Bonaparte's fall, the dramatist's words are fulfilled :

> For though usurpers sway the rule awhile,
> The heavens are just, and time suppresseth wrong.

At the conclusion of the war Southey wrote : 'The reputation of the English soldiers had not been higher in the days of the Black Prince, nor that of a British commander in the days of Marlborough.' Napier's words, perhaps, are stronger still : 'What Alexander's Macedonians were at Arbela, Hannibal's Africans at Cannæ, Cæsar's Romans at Pharsalia, Napoleon's guards at Austerlitz, such were Wellington's British soldiers at this period. The same men who had fought at Vimiera and Talavera contended at Orthes and Toulouse ; and six years of uninterrupted success had engrafted on their natural strength and fierceness a confidence which rendered them invincible. It is by this Soult's firmness and the constancy of his army are to be valued ; and the equality to which he reduced his great adversary at Toulouse is a proof of ability which a judicious friend would put forward rather than suppress.'

The same burning pages of this trenchant soldier and writer tell too truthfully of the evils of war, and of the cost and ruin entailed on the finances of a country by the mightiest victories. His concluding observations should be carefully read and weighed, so bitterly true are they, albeit

> Alone in that disastrous hour
> Britain stood firm and braved his power ;
> Alone she fought the battles of mankind !

In the eyes of Southey, Napoleon was the cruel usurper, and a flail wherewith to thresh the nations for their sins ; in Napier's, he was 'the most wonderful commander, the most sagacious politician, the most profound statesman' ; of which posterity will judge, and still form equally different opinions to the end of reckoning. Well, well ! As Longfellow says in his 'Wind over the Chimney,' after all,

> Books are the sepulchres of thought !

Meanwhile visions of peace comforted all men's hearts,

wearied with wars and rumours of wars, and of blood shed like water.

Ergo omnis longo solvit se Teucria luctu !

And yet all the while there were many, and among them Southey, who feared that John Bull would be duped by false candour and liberality. Nor, as was proved by the result, was he wide of the mark.

The initiatory treaty of peace was signed at Paris by the allied Powers, or rather by Austria, Russia, and Prussia, on April 11 ; and to Talleyrand alone is ascribed, by the best-informed, the resolution of placing Louis XVIII. on the throne of his ancestors. On the 13th Monsieur, the King's brother entered Paris, and went to the Church of Notre Dame to return thanks. On the 20th Bonaparte (as arranged) left Fontainebleau for his principality of Elba,—

Insula inexhaustis Chalybum generosa metallis,—

where he landed at Porto Ferrajo on May 3. On April 24 Louis XVIII. sailed from Dover for France, made his entry into Compiègne April 29, and into Paris on the very day Bonaparte reached Elba. The great funeral ceremony was performed at Paris on May 14, and the 'treaty of peace' was signed on the 30th ; the thirty-two articles of which bound the Powers engaged in the late war 'to send within two months plenipotentiaries to Vienna to regulate in a general congress the arrangements for completing' its dispositions.

Wilberforce was greatly disappointed at the termination of the treaty with France relative to the slave trade ; and so, no doubt, was good Mr. Peters of Pontesbury, before referred to ; but, as the Emperor of all the Russias said, 'What could be done, when your own ambassador gave way?' It was on June 27 that he expressed himself so strongly in the House, lamenting that 'the first act of the restored King of France was the restoration of a trade in slavery and blood.'

Sure enough, at this time the whole valley was in commotion, and the good old ladies who lived over the Brook did nothing but talk of 'Rowland,' as they called him —for, sooth to say, Sir Rowland and the 'last of the old squires,' before

the 'hunt's-up' in the morning, had had many a draught of nut-brown ale out of their old half-pint silver tankards. The talk of the oyster-women in 'Hudibras' was not more incessant than that of the market-women on Saturdays about the Shropshire hero as they threaded their way to the butter-market at Shrewsbury—busy women these, who gave more liberty to their tongues than to their hands whilst their baskets were on their heads.

But in the midst of all this excitement the old town found time to regret—many did, at least—one of its old inhabitants—Dr. Burney, the well-known musician, whose name has occurred before in these pages, the friend of Dr. Johnson and of his friends. He died in his apartments at Chelsea College on April 12. It has been said—I know not on what authority—that his grandfather, Mr. Macburney, had considerable property in Hanwood. I am not aware that he had, and I think I should have heard it from the late Rev. C. Peters of Pontesbury, a great lover of music. In his own history of that art he tells us that he was nursed at Cundover, and spent there 'the first twelve or thirteen years of his life.' No man left a pleasanter name behind him, and his children, Archdeacon Burney, Captain James Burney, and Madame D'Arblay, each filled their places well. The Greek scholar all Shrewsbury boys will remember, and in his latter days I met him at Lambeth Palace. Captain, afterwards Admiral, James Burney went to school to Eugene Aram, who scared him with his murderous story. Mrs. Warter knew him, and Mrs. Wood well recollected Madame D'Arblay, and, as before mentioned, was present at Warren Hastings' trial.

Readers of Shakspeare will call to mind the words of Edmund in 'Lear.'

> O! those eclipses do portend these divisions! fa, sol, la, mi.

From my boyhood I recollect Dr. Burney's explanation of the passage, who used Homer, Chaucer, Shakspeare, &c. to illustrate his subject.

'None of the commentators have been sufficiently skilled in music to see the meaning of these syllables in solmisation, which imply a sense of sounds so unnatural that ancient

musicians prohibited their use. *Mi contra fa est diabolus.* Shakspeare, however, shows by the context that he was well acquainted with the property of the musical intervals contained in the *Tritonus*, or sharp 4th, which, consisting of these tones without the intervention of a semitone, is extremely difficult to sing, and disagreeable when sung, if *mi* or *fa* is the last note of the phrase or passage.' So that Edmund's meaning is—the times, scared by portents and eclipses, are as much disturbed and dislocated as the unnatural sounds fa, sol, la, mi.

Within my recollection 'the waits' still existed in Shrewsbury, and I used to hear them by night, as a boy, before the Christmas holidays. Dr. Burney tells us how he remembered 'very early in his musical life to have heard one of the town waits at Shrewsbury *vamp a bass*, he being utterly unable to read any one that was written.' Our names of 'waits' and 'wakers' most probably tend one way—the German 'wacht,' or 'watch'; like that in Edward IV.'s charter, 'A wayte that nightelye from Mychalmas to Shrove Thorsdaye pipethe watche in this Courte fower times,' &c., &c. In the year 1479 among the accounts of the town are inserted 'Paid for the living of the minstrels called waits, each of them, 5*s.*'—a very large sum according to the money of that day. And again, 'Paid for bringing a minstrel called a wait from Northampton to Shrewsbury, 3*s.*'—which is, perhaps, an entry quite as extraordinary. But the history of the 'waits' is to be found in many antiquarian works, and to these the reader is referred. I mention them in connection with the name of Burney because I can remember them as weird-like sounds in the heavy middle of the night.

> Shifting, like streamers darted forth
> By the red streamers of the north!

It was now, when the joy of the nation was at its height, that the meed of victory was to be doled out with no sparing hand. And so on May 10 there came a message from the Prince Regent to the House saying that he had conferred upon Lord Wellington the title of a duke and marquis of the United Kingdom, at the same time recommending to its con-

sideration a grant for the support of the title. The amount agreed upon was 10,000*l.* per annum, at any time to be commuted for 300,000*l.* The case of a mansion being taken into consideration also, an additional 100,000*l.* was proposed and agreed to.

It was not till June 28 that the Duke of Wellington took his seat in the House of Lords. The following statement from Lord Eldon's 'Anecdote Book' refers to the subject, and is here quoted from his 'Life.'

It was on July 1 that the Duke returned thanks, and his words are memorable words, and he served his country as faithfully till the end of his days as he did in the fulness of his strength and or ever his eagle eye was dimmed; for he was great in war, and great in peace. One was he that verified old Nestor's speech in 'Troilus and Cressida.'

> In the reproof of chance
> Lies the true proof of man.

At the same time, or about it, other titles of honour were conferred, and Generals Graham, Beresford, and our county hero Sir Rowland, were raised to the peerage; a matter of great joy this to the old town and the whole neighbourhood, from the valley of the Rea to Hawkestone, where the ale flowed like water, and the nice old Romish priest of Shrewsbury said charitably, 'Il y a un Dieu pour les ivrognes,' the same kindly man who said of many of our churches—so true at that time, and for many years afterwards—'Le bon Dieu est mal logé.' He has been mentioned before, and I remember him well.

It may be mentioned here—slightly anticipating the date—that it was on June 30 that Lord Hill paid his triumphal visit to Shrewsbury. Never, said my Talking Friend, did such a sight of people (our Shropshire term) pass down the road; you might have thought that the sides of the valley were emptied and nothing left in the middle. The very countrymen wore ribbands in their hats, as if for an election. Amongst others the descendants of the old 'Roaring Boys' of Cherbury, before mentioned, came thundering down the road from Montgomery, and swept all before them—for who

could stand the charge of Cherbury? As for the old town itself, it was in a state of wild excitement. All was ringing of bells and roasting of sheep and oxen, and the excess as of some carnival. Perhaps the most pleasant sight was of the thousands who took their tea in the quarry—that lovely spot, with the Severn below, which I yet hope some day to see converted into the real *pleasaunce* of the town.

And it was decided to erect a column to his fame; and subscriptions were raised throughout the town and county, and a fine Doric pillar was begun on December 17, and completed June 18, 1816, the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo, at a cost of 5,973*l.*, and it welcomes all travellers from London; and all the visitors say that it does credit to Mr. Edward Haycock, the architect, and Mr. John Strapham, the builder, who gave the beautiful spiral staircase. Including the statue, it is 132 feet high, and its weight is 1,120 tons! And yet it needs not to be said as was said of Vanbrugh's heavy pile at Woodstock—

> Lie heavy on him, Earth, for he
> Laid many a heavy weight on thee.

Old records of the city of London speak of days 'of love at St. Paul's Church,'—that is, as Mr. Riley explains it, days for making terms of reconciliation; and so it appeared to be now—the Regent being the only exception, who, on June 3, communicated to the House that it was 'his fixed and unalterable determination never to meet her Royal Highness upon any occasion, either in private or public.' Painful tidings at such a time! For it was on June 8 that the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia arrived, and on the 9th was held the grand Court at Carlton House, and perhaps at Carlton House that day there was no prouder man than rough and bluff old Marshal Blucher, who, when afterwards taken to the top of St. Paul's, exclaimed with an indescribable turn of his moustache, 'Was für Plunder!'—what a city to sack!

On the 14th the allied sovereigns visited Oxford.

On June 18 the great feast at Guildhall was given to the Prince Regent by the Lord Mayor, Sir William Domville, as a reception to the Emperors of Russia and Austria and

the King of Prussia. The value of the plate was estimated at 200,000*l.*; the dinner cost 25,000*l.*—a lavish sum, which but testifies to the greatness of the occasion.

Early in the year—as early as February 21—a message of France reached London, and as it excited considerable notice in the old town, and thence reached the valley of the Rea, it must be mentioned here. As is well known, Lord Cochrane's name was implicated, and the account is very curious in the details; and the charge (since rebutted in his 'Autobiography') was apparently brought home to him and established in the Court of King's Bench on June 10, and on July 5 he was expelled the House. For the trial and other matters, the reader is referred to the trial in the 'Annual Register,' and to the 'Autobiography' of the seaman just referred to. Of the frauds committed there was no doubt; but it is clear to us now that Lord Cochrane was not implicated in them, at least as a guilty person, and the whole matter was so mixed up with political intrigue and popular excitement as not to be very easily unravelled. Passion evidently overlaid reason. So true it is—

> Civil dissension is a viperous worm,
> That gnaws the bowels of the commonwealth.

It is well recollected by many how he was ignominiously condemned to the pillory, on which he said, honestly as a sailor, 'If I am guilty I really merit the whole of the sentence which has been passed upon me; if innocent, one penalty cannot be inflicted with more justice than another.' The Crown, however, interposed, and remitted the infamous part of the punishment; and then Westminster pronounced him innocent by re-electing him.

For the rest of this painful business the reader is referred to the historical documents of the day; to one matter I refer here, because, in my younger days, 'The Stocks,' cousin-german to the Pillory, were common throughout all the villages, or most of the villages, on the banks of the Rea.

As for the Pillory, the old French *Pillorie*, it is one of our oldest punishments of infamy, for it existed there before the Norman Conquest, and is called in the Laws of Canute *Hals-fang*, or catchneck, the same as the Low Latin *collistringium*,

or stretchneck. Mr. Timbs saw four men in the Pillory about 1812, at the north end of Fleet Market, Holborn Bridge. 'The last person that stood in the Pillory in London was Peter James Bossy, for perjury, in the Old Bailey, June 23, 1830. It was abolished in Great Britain in 1837, by the Statute 1 Vict. c. 23.

Miss Berry tells us of her horror at seeing a man in the Pillory in Oxford Street, March 9, 1811. The Old Stocks (never used) was in existence in West Tarring when I came here in 1834, and was then at the entrance of the Rectory Croft gates, whence they had been removed from the Market Place, the stone of which still remains by the shop door, and which I hindered Mrs. Fenner from removing, being a 'landmark'; and subsequent to that date I was distressed to see a drunken man in the stocks where the Town Hall now stands. The reader of *Lear* will call to mind how Kent was put in the stocks, and how the Earl of Gloster tried to save him, saying:—

> Your purpos'd low correction
> Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches
> For pilferings, and most common trespasses,
> Are punish'd with.

And then Edgar, in the character of Poor Tom, describes himself as one 'who drinks the green mantle of the standing pool: who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and *stocked*, punished, and imprisoned.'

The time that a person stood in the pillory was usually an hour a day, or, as in the case of Henry de Passelewe, 'one league's journey,' so allowing three miles to the hour. Sometimes, however, it was for two hours, and so, 41 Edward III., A.D. 1367, 'Robert de Edensore, *skrywyn*,' vile scrivenor, for forging a deed of entail, 'was to have the punishment of the pillory, to stand thereon *two hours* of the day, with the said deeds hung by a string from his neck.' It should be added here that the pillory for women was called the *Thense*. Any old Shrewsbury boy will call to mind the 'Furca' of the Romans, and the *πεντεσόριυδος νόσος* of Aristotle and Aristophanes. The Chinese 'cangue' appears to be something of this sort. So widespread are devices of cruelty!

Before I end my notes on the year a few mixed matters may be noticed in passing—the collections of *Horæ Subsecivæ.*

The Saffron Gatherers on the Rea, by the Lea, have been mentioned before in these pages. On August 16 this year seven yearlings were said to have been killed by eating the Colchicum autumnale at Beverstone, near Tutbury, Stafford (noted formerly for the 'bull-running'), where it grew freely, as with us. Some five or six years ago the same thing was supposed to have happened at the Isle near Shrewsbury ; but the veterinary surgeon, Mr. Litt, a clever man, now no more, was very doubtful upon the subject, and two very able letters appeared in one of the local papers from his hand.

After a long period of dry weather, especially in France, it broke up on the evening of December 16 with a great hurricane, which fell heavy in the north and about Greenock. It did great damage at Stafford, and was severely felt in Shropshire—indeed over the whole kingdom, continuing, with more or less violence, for a week. My Talking Friend said that it roared like thunder in his time-worn branches, and severely tried the strength of his roots.

It is said that the 'Gretna-Green' marriages ended this year. 'A man named Paisley, a tobacconist, is said to have been actually the first who celebrated these clandestine marriages over the border. He stuck to his work the longest, for he did not die (and then in harness) till 1814, when he had reached a very advanced age. An Act of Parliament has since destroyed the vocation of the border priests of Hymen.'

Mr. Timbs, in his 'London and Westminster,' makes mention of a Fleet marriage in 1770, at which 'the woman ran across Ludgate Hill in her shift,' in pursuance of a vulgar error that a man was not liable for the debts of his wife if he married her in that dress.

The notorious impostor, self-imposed upon, and who imposed upon so many, born in Devonshire about 1750, and for long a domestic servant at Exeter, Joanna Southcott, died on December 27 this year. She was to have been delivered the Prince of Peace (such were the blasphemous words) on

October 19 preceding, when she was above sixty. Southey might well say, in his account of her in 'Espriella's Letters from England,' that 'credulity and vanity are foul feeders,' and to Neville White, under September 7, 'God help the men who flatter the age upon its increased knowledge and wisdom. This woman has her thousands and her ten thousands of believers in England.' Her name has been before alluded to, and references made to the only Southcottian I ever knew. A recent trial, however, tells us that the same delusions have existed within a few years; and, as for clergymen like Mr. Pomeroy, so ready to be her disciple till scared by ridicule, I may say, in words from Whitlock's 'Zootamia,' 'What stout defenders of the faith can we expect they should be that swoon at a syllogism, purge both ways at a dilemma, and are ready to make their own testament if they see a Greek one? Where hath error scaled Truth's walls but where it found them thus slenderly guarded?' Happily or unhappily, this poor woman had not the virtue of silence, and in all the papers she issued 'the language alike violates common sense and common syntax.'

The following extracts from Lord Eldon's life under this year may serve as an antidote to the melancholy and blasphemous nonsense of a Joanna Southcott. The former is an evident abbreviation from Locke 'The Scriptures have God for their author, salvation for their object, and, as to the matter they contain. God being their author, it is truth without mixture of error.'

A small volume containing the latter portion of the New Testament in Greek was also in Lord Eldon's possession at the time of his death. It has the following words in his handwriting: 'This little book my revered schoolmaster, Hugh Moises, generally had in his pocket, nearly always in his walks.—ELDON. I desire this to be preserved in my family as long as possible.' It is pleasant to read such a memorial.

Such are a lawyer's words, and I will venture to add those of a great physician, Sir Thomas Brown, of Norwich, who practically combated the old adage, *Tres medici, duo Athei.* His words are: 'Men's works have an age like them-

selves, and still they outlive their authors, yet have they a stint and period to their duration. This only is a work too hard for the teeth of time, and cannot perish in the general flames, when all things shall confess their ashes!' No common philosopher this!

Meanwhile, in the hour of victory, Southey was calling for improved education, and the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

Look around thee and behold what ills,
Remediable and yet unremedied,
Afflict man's wretched race!
Put on the panoply of Faith!
Bestir thyself against their inward force,
Ignorance and Want, with all their brood
Of miseries and crimes.

. . . . . .

So, Britain, shall thine aged monarch's wish
Receive its due accomplishment,
That wish which with the good
(Had he no other praises)
Through all succeeding times would rank his name,
That all within his realm
Might learn THE BOOK, which all
Who rightly learn shall live.

CHAPTER LIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF GEORGE III.

Most men know that in a watch or clock
When it is out of order once, or broke,
The wheels that are unfaulty move awry,
As well as they in whom the faults do lye.
WITHER'S *Britain's Remembrancer*, Conclusion, iii. 156.

The visible world, and the things which we see or know by sensible experiment, are as *Satan's Chess Board*: which way soever we look or turn our thoughts, he hath somewhat or other still ready at hand to give our weak and untrained desires the *check*, and to hazard the losing of our souls and bodies.—T. JACKSON'S *Works*, vol. iii. 515 (*infra*, p. 865, and i. 638).

To worship a graven image, or to make cakes and burn incense to the queen of heaven, is not a worse idolatry than it is for a man to set up self will, to devote himself to the serving of it, and to give up himself to a compliance with his own will, as contrary to the divine and eternal will.—JOHN SMITH'S *Select Discourses*, p. 429. *Reprint* 1821.

The triumph and the vanity,
The rapture of the strife,
The earthquake voice of Victory,
To thee the breath of life;
The sword, the sceptre, and the sway
Which man seemed made but to obey,
Wherewith renown was rife—
All quell'd!—Dark Spirit!—what must be
The madness of thy memory?
LORD BYRON, *Ode to Napoleon.*

THE New Year—1815—came in restlessly, and the time-honoured head of my Talking Friend laboured under the blast. Used as he was to sleet and snow, and the worst weather that was ever brewed in Habberley Hole, he did not like it;—but loved to dwell upon summer days, and the midsummer shoots of his earlier days, when no oak of the forest — Stiperstones or other — could throw out stronger ones.

Of Celt and Cymry—Romans, Saxons, and Normans—as we have seen, the old oak knew much from his father; but latterly he referred but little to ancient things, but would dwell upon the happiness of "THE SUNNY VALLEY"—for such he called the spot where he stood, and I, a child of that valley, was ever ravished with his 'talk.'

But, as I said, the year 1815 did not enter with sunshine, and he said there was more weather to come, as he heard, night after night, the creaking of the wild geese' wings as they flew towards Marton Pool—a sign of hard weather which he was in the habit of constantly referring to. The truth is that the *Argenteus anser*—tame or wild—was a great favourite of his, and he would tell how, from time immemorial, the whole valley of the Rea was notorious for its flocks of geese, rivalling those of Pulley Common, and one as like to the other as

> The twinn'd stones
> Upon the number'd beach.

Many, he would add, lived to a great age, and were kept as pets, and the grave senior of the flock went by the name of 'Old Goosie,' being looked upon as a sort of leader and law-giver on the Green.

And all at once I bethought me of the pleasant days I spent in Copenhagen, amongst the learned Danes and Icelanders, and of Professor Schlegel's edition of those ancient laws—*Hin Forna Lögbók Islændiága sem nefnist Grágás*—of which he says in his *Commentatio Historica*: 'Vis autem hujus appellationis, si recte vides, nulla alia est quam codex legum vetustissimus, cum anseres feros cipereos ad summam ætatem pervenire posse vetus fecerit fabula in Islandia a vulgo hominum recepta,' &c.; and then he gives in a note: 'Islandiæ rustici de seni loquentes dicere solent: Hann ci ordin hrota, vetus anser factus est.' Neither more nor less, in fact, than my Talking Friend's 'Old Goosie.' One died this very year, 1815—reports the Chronicle to the 'Annual Register'—at Posbrook Cottage, Titchfield, at the advanced age of *sixty-four years.*

Mr. Baker tells us of a large black and white one, on the White Nile, 'with a crimson head and neck, and a red and yellow horny protuberance on the top of the head. This

variety has a sharp spur upon the wing, an inch long, and exceedingly powerful; it is used as a weapon of defence for striking, like the spurred wing of the plover.' He gives an etching of the head, and in a subsequent chapter he says that one which he had killed weighed exactly eleven pounds, and adds: 'This goose has on either pinion joint a sharp horny spur, an inch in length.'

How would my Talking Friend, had he been a reader of books instead of a close observer of mankind, have delighted in reading Sir Emerson Tennent's account of the 'Hanza,' or Sacred Goose, together with the identity of name in all parts of the globe! But *satis de anseribus*, and 'such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff.'

The Valley, of course, felt the pressure of dear bread, but even here, distressed as many were, a little bit of racy humour showed itself among the Pontesbury colliers. There was a little drunken tailor, who, instead of minding his needle, was constantly crying out vociferously against the Corn Tax—a matter on which his darker brethren felt as strongly as he did, but, having families to support, they minded their work. One evening, on their way to their 'night turn,' they found him hopelessly drunk on the wayside, and determined on a waggish spree. They accordingly lifted him into the basket and took him down with them into the pit, laying him on his side, near to their work, where he lay insensible till towards morning. But, as the short hours advanced, he began to come to himself, and the wags, at work on their backs and sides, heard him bemoaning and lamenting himself, evidently under the impression that he had got to the 'wrong place,' and, watching him narrowly through their slim gauze wire-lamps, they observed him turn restlessly from side to side, and at last heard him say, in the most melancholy tone: 'Wretched, hapless men! Then, I suppose, I am even such as ye are!'

When their turn was over, and they were raised at day-break from the pit, they took the sobered little tailor up with them, but he never forgave the practical joke, and hated all colliers till his life's end—even the kind-hearted John Aston, whom everyone liked, and who first took me down into a coal-pit, and explained to me the work which colliers had to do

in the dark. When poor Aston, now no more, told him never to mind, the only answer he got was the old proverb, 'Like will to like, as the devil said to the collier.' Shakespeare somewhere speaks of the 'collied night,' and the poor drunken tailor never forgot the darkness he had felt.

Sir Humphry Davy's safety lamp was not in use at this time, only candles and clay, in our common pits; but his 'Discovery of a Method for preventing Explosions from Fire-damp in Mines' was communicated to the Royal Society and published in their Transactions this year. My friendly collier, John Aston, lived, I think, till somewhere about 1830. He was a delicate man, full of hopes and disappointments; as I have just read—

> Hopes have precarious life,
> They are oft blighted, wither'd, snapped sheer off,
> In vigorous growth, and timed to rottenness;
> But faithfulness can feed on suffering,
> And knows no disappointment.

In the early months of the year divers matters were brought before the House and talked of in the country, such as Mr. Tierney's motion on the Civil List, on April 14, and returned to on May 8. On April 18 was a further discussion of the Slave Trade, and although, to Wilberforce's great chagrin, the Bill he was so much interested in was lost on June 30, he still pressed his points, and moved for leave to bring in a Bill for 'better preventing the illicit importation of slaves into the British Colonies.' Nor was the Roman Catholic question allowed to rest, for on May 11 a petition was presented by Sir Henry Parnell, said to contain the unequivocal opinion of the mass of the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

Somewhere about this time old John Diggory's sister in London wrote him word that his Majesty's statue had been set up at Guildhall, and that there was a wonderful crowd and sight of people there. And, true enough, on June 3 it was set up, of dark-coloured marble, at the end of the Great Council Chamber, and none ever deserved statue better, for, as the inscription begins, 'He was born and bred a Briton, and endeared to a brave, free, and loyal people,' &c.

Poor good man! he knew nothing of the tribute paid him by a loving people, but dreamt sometimes of pageantry in his blind solitude, though given constantly to prayer in his intervals of rest. How true are the nervous lines of Churchill!

> How much do they mistake, how little know
> Of kings, of kingdoms, and the pains which flow
> From royalty, who fancy that a crown,
> Because it glitters, must be lin'd with down!
> With outside show and such appearance caught,
> They look no farther, and, by folly taught,
> Prize high the toys of thrones, but never find
> One of the many cares which lurk behind
> The gem they worship, which a crown adorns,
> Not once suspect that crown is laid with thorns.
> O! might reflection folly's place supply,
> Would we one moment use her piercing eye,
> Then should we learn what woe from grandeur springs,
> And learn to pity, not to envy, kings.

Meanwhile, we must revert a bit, and so bring up the story of the hundred days—days, it is true, of glory, but of great misery also, as thousands of families in France and England knew, who wept in secret.

> Ille dolet vere, qui sine teste dolet.

There was a restless feeling, which, like an inward monitor, told the nation at large that the time for peace was not yet come; and it was well known that in France, although 'his Majesty was assured that all his subjects would shorten their own lives, if necessary, to add to his' (the very words of the address), the army would greet with delight the return of Bonaparte, whose position in Elba allowed of constant intercommunication and secret counsel with his friends, more particularly from Naples, by the intervention of his sister. Murat also, the 'preux chevalier,' though in treaty with Austria, was ready to say—

> This pelting, prating peace is good for nothing;

and Napoleon, his vexation over, would have capped him from his Lucan—

> Causa jubet superos melior sperare secundos.

For myself, I bethought me of the lines of Shakespeare, and was well contented :

> This England never did (nor ever shall)
> Lie at the proud feet of a conqueror,
> But when it first did help to wound itself.

As for the nation itself at this time, their courage was up, and the people said :

> Pejor est bello timor ipse belli ;

and an echo came from the most distant parts of the island

> Non sunt minæ ; jam propius accessit malum.

Nor was the nation kept long in suspense, for on February 27

> The man of blood
> Burst from the iron isle,

embarking at Porto Ferraio. On March 1 he landed at Cannes on board a brig, followed by four small vessels and about a thousand men, moving towards Grenoble. The reader may call to mind that passage in Ivanhoe where Prince John opens the letter in which he found written : 'Take heed to yourself, for the devil is unchained.'

The news soon reached the valley of the Rea, and even there, retired as was the spot, all was excitement. The rapid conclusion of the minds of the people in general was that he must be dispossessed of power, or Europe could have no rest, but be uptorn again with bloody strife. Happily this was the conclusion of the sovereigns of Europe, and they prepared themselves in earnest for the coming fight, which wrought, as Southey thought, 'the greatest deliverance that civilised society has experienced since the defeat of the Moors by Charles Martel.'

But to follow the usurper on his way. On March 8 he arrived at Grenoble, where he was joined by the 7th Regiment of the Line, commanded by La Bedoyère. On the 9th he appeared before Lyons, and the cry of '*Vive l'Empereur*' assured him of a ready reception, Monsieur the King's brother, the Duke of Orleans, and Marshal Macdonald having to decamp thence in haste for Chaumont from whence they

returned to Paris. On the 11th all was alarm there, and a report was made to the Chamber of Peers, by the King's order, of Bonaparte's rapid progress, and of the vast defections in his favour.

At first he represented himself as the Lieutenant-General of his son, but having got possession of Lyons, and being hailed as Emperor by the soldiers, he assumed his former dignity without disguise, and prefixed to his public papers 'Napoleon, by the Grace of God, and the Constitution of the Empire, Emperor of the French.' In the words of the 'Annual Register,' 'He issued a decree by which he declared all changes made during his absence in the administration, both civil and military, null and void; the white cockade, and the orders of St. Louis, the Holy Ghost, and St. Michael, abolished; the military establishment of the king suppressed; the goods and chattels of the Bourbon princes sequestrated; the nobility and feudal titles abolished; the emigrants who had entered with the king banished; and the Chamber of Peers and Deputies dissolved.'

And now came the defection of Ney—the bravest of the brave, as Napoleon has called him. But that painful history needs not to be recorded here, and how he said that he could bring Bonaparte to the King at Paris in an iron cage. Enough to say that, on finding that the inhabitants of Chalons-sur-Saone had seized his park of artillery, he declared, 'It is impossible for me to stop the water of the ocean with the palm of my hand,' and so went over to his old master, lost all his self-respect, and, though a soldier every inch to the last, knew no rest or peace; often thinking, perhaps, of that brave officer's words, who broke his sword in two, and threw it at his feet, saying, 'It is easier for a man of honour to break iron, than to infringe his word,' and joined him not.

The King left Paris on the 15th with the Princes of the Blood for Lisle, and Bonaparte entered on the evening of the 20th. 'And thus'—I am again giving the words of the 'Annual Register'—'within three weeks from his landing as a desperate adventurer, he marched, without having occasion to fire a musket, through the greatest part of France, to mount a throne occupied by the legitimate successor of a long line

of native kings, and apparently fenced by all the authority of a potent monarchy.' But even yet his progress seemed too slow for his ambition. As the poet said,

> Slow seems their speed, whose thoughts before them run.

But, notwithstanding the declarations he made at Paris about having a twenty years' truce in his pocket, the counter-declaration from Vienna, dated March 13, at once showed its falsity, by asserting that, having broken the convention which established him in the Isle of Elba, he had 'destroyed the only legal title on which his existence depended, and had manifested to the universe that there could be neither peace nor truce with him; and the Powers consequently declared that Napoleon Bonaparte had placed himself out of the pale of civil and social relations, and, as an enemy and disturber of the tranquillity of the world, had rendered himself liable to public vengeance.' And so, from this time, all was preparation for the battle; nor could the Duchesse d'Angoulême bring over the people of Bordeaux, but quitting the place of her attachments, she said to those who wore the white cockade, but would not fight in her interests: 'I see your fears, you are cowards; I absolve you from the oath you have broken!' and turning her horse, she rode away, and soon after, on April 1, embarked on board of an English frigate.' A woman, she, *virilis constantiæ*—a very Cornelia in her way—

> Cornelia, mater
> Gracchorum.

The Duke himself, having endeavoured in vain to bring the army over to the defence of the King, was obliged at last to give in, and sailed, by convention, from Cette for Barcelona April 18. Loyal also as Brittany and La Vendée were, their efforts were unavailing.

But these pages are not a history in detail, and it is enough to say here that after the ceremonial of the Champ de Mai, which took place on June 1, and on which occasion Bonaparte declared that as Emperor, Consul, and soldier he held everything from the people, all was, in his own mind, staked on the coming struggle. It was on the 12th that he left Paris

with Marshal Bertrand and General Drouet for the old battle-field of Europe, or, as Southey calls Belgium,

The theatre of strife through every age.

Passing by the fights of Quatre-Bras and Ligny on the 16th, and with the veteran Blucher's wounds, and his resolute determination under a defeat, the movement on Mont St. Jean, together with the death of the Duke of Brunswick, it will be only necessary to add that, on old Blücher's being obliged to fall back during the night of the 16th to Wavre, the Duke of Wellington retired upon Genappe, and on the morning of the 17th took up his position 'at WATERLOO, which crossed the high roads to Brussels from Charlroi and Nivelle, and had in its front the house and garden of Hougoumont, and in another point the farm of La Haye Sainte. By the left he communicated with the Prussians at Wavre.'

Quatre-Bras and Ligny over and Mont St. Jean occupied, on the 17th the Duke sent a memorandum to our county hero, Lord Hill, and thus, being sure of his man, he was enabled to make all further orders and arrangements with entire confidence.

But for the account of the battle its historians must be referred to, only I may note in brief that after the heavy rains of the night of the 17th, the morning broke heavy, sullen, and lowering,—and a fearfully memorable day was the 18th, for the battle swayed from side to side, from nine in the morning (or, as the Duke's despatch says, about ten) till eight in the evening. At its commencement the sun could not burst through the thick darkness, and the moon had risen when the fight was done, and the pursuit of the Prussians continued. Happy was it, indeed, for the wearied combatants that by half-past five Bülow's 29,000 men were on the ground, for although British courage never failed, the strength of the strongest man was bowed, and they fought hard to maintain their ground.

What words can tell of Ney's fierce attack on La Haye Sainte, and of that of the Imperial Guard! The bravest of the brave knew that these were the last turning-points of the fight, and even the Duke himself, who, like Nelson, knew no fear, was anxious and disturbed.

Happy was it, I repeat, that the Prussians were come up and coming. It was between four and five that, encouraged by old Blücher, they passed through the wood of Wavre to a point near Frischermont, from whence he was enabled to discern the position of the combatants. He saw the necessity of pushing on, and at five o'clock the helpful aid came, and by six thirty battalions, twenty-seven squadrons, and sixty-four guns were brought into action. It was at this time that Ney called upon Napoleon for fresh supplies, which he was unable to give, and then came the attack alluded to on La Haye Sainte, and the dogged resolution of the brave French soldiery, who were hardly driven out of it after having once taken it. All this Napoleon observed, 'and noticed, at the same time, that the wood of Soignies glistened with bayonets; and that along the Wavre road, in the direction of Smoelen, and along the rear of the allied posts at Possetotte, fresh columns were advancing. He could not hide from himself the truth that the next hour must decide his fate; and he resolved to hazard all upon one cast, and overthrow the English—or perish.

But if Napoleon saw his difficulties, the Duke was no less aware of his, and knew well enough what the forming of the Imperial Guard meant in front of La Belle Alliance, even if he did not realise Napoleon's intent of passing Hougoumont and falling on the centre of the English position; and hard, indeed, was the fight, and true Mr. Gleig's words: 'Regiments stood to be mowed down like grass before the reaper,' and the Duke could send no reinforcements, but still awaiting the fuller force of the Prussians, and thoroughly relying on old Blücher's word, could only say, 'You must hold out, and all will be well.'

And then, by-and-by, when each general had made the best disposition of his men, came the dreadful attack of the Imperial Guard, on which the staunchest and best Catholic might have exclaimed:

> Dreadful to hear of, dreadful to tell,
> Jesu Maria! guard us well!

Never did Guards fight more nobly; but the die was cast, and Napoleon, as he cast a hurried glance over the field of

battle, 'saw his Guards coming back in wild confusion, and strewing the earth with their dead. He looked round for his cavalry, and beheld but broken squadrons fleeing for life, yet failing to secure it. His guns were either dismounted or abandoned by their artillerymen, and there was no reserve on which to fall back. Then it was that the terrible words escaped him, which will be remembered and repeated as often as the tale of his overthrow is told: '*Tout est perdu—sauve qui peut!*' was his last order, and turning his horse's head, he galloped from the field.'

The Duke's despatches reached England on the night of the 21st, Bonaparte reached Paris on the morning of the 21st, and his Declaration to the French people is signed June 22nd, in which he said, 'I offer myself as a sacrifice to the hatred of the enemies of France. May they prove sincere in their declaration, and really have directed their armies only against my power! My political life is terminated, and I proclaim my son, under the title of Napoleon II., Emperor of the French.' As is well known, his abdication was accepted, but the nomination of his son was eluded. After the wild discussion in the Chamber of Peers he retired to Malmaison; then came the advance upon Paris, the Convention of July 3, and Bonaparte's flight for America, when his star set for ever.

Closely watched by the English cruisers, on the 15th he delivered himself up to the *Bellerophon* from the French brig *Epervier*. Captain Maitland at once set sail for England, and arrived at Torbay on the 24th. 'Thus,' to use the words of the 'Annual Register,' 'after all the vicissitudes of this extraordinary man's life, during many years of which he had been the most conspicuous object of the age, the wonder and the terror of all Europe, he saw the sphere of his activity limited to the quarter-deck of a man-of-war, belonging to that nation which alone had perpetually resisted his power, and curbed his restless ambition.' Looking to the misery he caused in all the nations he overran, was it too severe in the poet to say:

> If amongst hateful tyrants of all times
> For endless execration handed down,
> One may be found surpassing all in crimes,
> One that for infamy shall bear the crown,

Napoleon is that man, in guilt the first,
Pre-eminently bad among the worst?

On August 7 he was transferred from the *Bellerophon* to the *Northumberland*, Captain Sir G. Cockburn, which sailed the next day for St. Helena. He arrived there October 15, and landed the next evening. On this point Southey and Lord Byron, at least, agreed. Many will call to mind the ode of the latter to Napoleon, and this striking stanza :

Then, haste thee to thy sullen Isle
And gaze upon the sea ;
That element may meet thy smile,
It ne'er was made for thee !

There it was that he needed to be watched, and there Sir Hudson Lowe, who has been called the worst used servant in his Majesty's dominions, watched him well. He had a duty to perform, and he performed it. Some even yet prate of his severity ; but, as the Duke said, 'He obeyed orders.' I had the honour of being introduced to him, and I mind well, even now, his noble stature, but his face of anxious thought.

It happens to many nations to catch a Tartar, and not to know what exactly to do with him ; and it would have relieved the nation of much difficulty if Napoleon—like that magnificent but unhallowed barbarian and savage, Theodore of Magdala—had died in battle. Later in the year, on October 14, Lord Eldon wrote thus on the St. Helena matter to his brother, Sir William Scott : '*Party* I don't mind much ; *posterity* not a great deal ; but, of this transaction, in all its *particulars*, it will be as little informed in matter of fact, as it is on most others ; but to do the thing that is right, is really matter of most anxious concern to me.' Right or wrong, there was he taken, and there he died May 5, 1821.

Behold him when unbidden thoughts arise
Of his old passions and unbridled power ;
As the fierce tiger in confinement lies
And dreams of blood that he must taste no more ;
Then, waking in that appetite of rage,
Frets to and fro within his narrow cage ;

a stanza which reminds an old Shrewsbury boy of the lines of Juvenal :

Æstuat infelix angusto limite mundi,
Ut Gyaræ clausus scopulis parvaque Seripho.

It was not till the evening of the 24th or the 25th that the news of the Battle of Waterloo reached the valley of the Rea, when the little bells rang out their little peal! overpowered by those of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, whose sound came on, mellowed by the distance. Every bell in the old town rang out its best, for all the people, as one man, not only rejoiced that the fight was won, and the usurper flown, but were in raptures to hear that the Shropshire hero was safe, and had done, as he always had done, nobly in the battle. Within a day or two the contents of the Duke's despatch, which spoke so decidedly of old Blücher's help, said of him likewise, 'I am particulary indebted to General Lord Hill for his assistance and conduct upon this as upon all former occasions.' Never men knew each other better. Of all others, Lord Hill was the man to carry out an order, and to hold a position. To outward appearance of

Skillness and unpractised infancy,

he had that resolute determination within which wins battles; and although cautious and circumspect, was as bold as a lion, ready to say with Cressida,

To fear the worst often causes the worst.

Well might the old county love him as it did, and rejoice at every step he won.

The vote of 200,000*l.* to the Duke's additional grants; the thanks of both Houses, not only to him, but to old Blücher and the Prussian army, and to other distinguished officers; the rejoicings in London and the festivities elsewhere—these are matters not particularly concerning the valley of the Rea; but—Has the real history of the battle ever been written?

But, whatever the history yet to be told may be, Southey said well in his Argument to the 'Pilgrimage to Waterloo': 'The direct object of Bonaparte was to establish a military despotism wherever his power extended: and the immediate and inevitable consequence of such a system is to brutalise and degrade mankind. The contest in which this country was engaged against that tyrant, was a struggle between good and evil principles, and never was there a victory so important to

the best hopes of human nature as that which was won by British valour at Waterloo; its effects extending over the whole civilised world, and involving the vital interests of all mankind.'

And yet he was no lover of war. What are his words?

'Even in its best estate, with all the alleviation of courtesy and honour, with all the correctives of morality and religion, war is so great an evil that to engage in it without a clear necessity is a crime of the blackest dye. When the necessity is clear (and such, assuredly, I hold it to have been in our struggle with Bonaparte), it then becomes a crime to shrink from it.'

Never man rejoiced more at this great victory than did Southey, and the account of the bonfire on Skiddaw, on the night of August 21, in a letter to his brother, Dr. Southey, will amply repay anyone's reading. How few recollect that night now except Edith, who tells to this day the famous anecdote of the great poet Wordsworth, and how he wickedly kicked the kettle of boiling water over with which the punch was to have been made, and skulked away ignominiously in a red cloak which he had borrowed from Mr. Southey, and which betrayed him; and how Southey went towards the whole party and communicated the discovery, and, getting them about him, 'I punished him by singing a parody, which they all joined in: "'Twas *you* that kicked the kettle down! 'twas *you*, sir, *you*."'

> And we did well when on our mountain's height
> For Waterloo we raised the festal flame,
> And in our triumph taught the star-lit night
> To ring with Wellington's victorious name,
> Making the far-off mariner admire
> To see the crest of Skiddaw plumed with fire!

The deep interest Southey took in the field of Waterloo ended in a journey to see it in September, and he did not reach Keswick again till December 6, a long absence for a man who lived by his pen and his inkstand! His own words are the best introduction to his well-known pilgrimage:

> But, as I once had journeyed to behold,
> Far off, Ourique's consecrated field,

Where Portugal, the faithful and the bold,
Assumed the symbols of her sacred shield ;
More reason now that I should bend my way,
The field of British glory to survey.

So forth I set upon this pilgrimage,
And took the partner of my life with me,
And our dear girl, just ripe enough of age,
Retentively to see what I should see ;
That, thus with mutual recollections fraught,
We might bring home a store for after-thought.

It so happened that Edith was attacked by scarlet fever and was at death's door on her return ; but this was after she had visited the field, of which she had full and perfect reminiscences, besides many little things she picked up and still retains—buckles, bullets, and many flowers which she dried and kept, and keeps still. The flowers she plucked, childlike, as they grew ; but every now and then the scent of death would cross her, and she turned away sick and faint. Was it the cause of her illness ? Whether or not, the truth of these stanzas is *literal* to her even yet, and she can tell of Hougoumont, La Haye Sainte, La Belle Alliance, &c., &c., in words which startle the ears of an old soldier still.

And the poor, good old King, in the midst of all this national glory and rejoicing, where was he ? What knew he of it—he, who was wrapt up in the good of his people and the welfare of the nation ? Dear, blessed old man ! His mental health was hopeless, and it is probable that he never had any inkling of the dearest life's blood that was shed, or of the despot's fall, or of Britannia's triumphs ; and I called to mind the lines of Wither's 'Philarete,' who looked to the blessings of a Higher Power, and to Him who gave them.

For, although to have a mind
Nat'rally to good inclined,
And to live it, would assure
Reason that it might endure ;
Yet, since man was first unjust,
There's no warrant for such trust.
Virtues that most wonder win
Would converted be to sin
If their flourishings began
From no better root than man.

Our best virtues, when they are
Of themselves, we may compare
To the beauty of a flower
That is blasted in an hour,
And which, growing to be fuller,
Turns into some loathèd colour.
But, those being freely given,
And confirm'd to me from heav'n,
Have a promise on them past,
And for evermore shall last;
Diamond-like, their lustre clearing
More and more by use and wearing.

In passing on from the great battle to other matters a question has often been asked: Were our great heroes and other heroes men of study, or did they only study men? The answer is: War and history were their study, but they did more especially read and manage men.

Marlborough, as is well known, was deeply versed in the art of war, and a student of strategics; and the Duke of Wellington told General Sir James Shaw-Kennedy that it was his rule to study for himself some hours every day, and that he began to do so before he went to India. As before mentioned, Napoleon studied Tacitus and Lucan, and no doubt Cæsar also, who, by the bye, was himself well versed in the articles of war, and read all that he could lay his hands upon. Previous to acting with the army in Italy, in 1796, Napoleon had stored his mind well. 'And they,' says the authority above quoted, 'all acted on the fount of principles established in their minds.' They fought as men prepared for the battle.

And this induces me to throw in by the way dear old Bishop Butler's advice to us at Shrewsbury. Always asserting that 'All work and no play' was a ruinous system, he pressed the 'Hoc age,' and insisted upon what was done being done well, and that idleness was to the mind what want of exercise was to the thews and muscles of the body. One was he of all others to have said with Burnet, 'There is no employment so bad as having none at all; the mind will contract a rust, and an unfitness for any good thing, and a man must either fill up his time with good or, at least, innocent business,

or it will run to the worst sort of waste—to sin and to vice. And I bethought me of a striking passage in one of St. Chrysostom's homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, where he speaks of idleness as the rust of the soul and the mind. And he concludes by asking, significantly, '*Τίνι δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀηδὴς ἄνθρωπος πολυσαρκίαν ἀσκῶν, φωκῆς δίκην συρόμενος;*' dragging and trailing himself on like a seal? Where had he seen one?

Against this I have quoted the lines, following, from Claudian, which may yet interest some old Shrewsbury boy who reads these pages:

> Luxuries, prædulce malum, quæ dedita semper
> Corporis arbitriis hebetat caligine sensus,
> Membraque Circæis effœminat acrius herbis;
> Blanda quidem vultus, sed qua non tetrius ulla
> Ultrices fucata genas, et amicta dolosis
> Illecebris, torvos auro circumlinit hydros.
> Illa voluptatum multos innexuit hamis.

'Proper words in proper places' is perhaps as good a definition of a good style as any other, and easy writing is usually the result of much and hard reading, or perhaps of digestion of what is read. So that when we find Horace Walpole writing what follows, knowing at the same time the manifold contents of his gossiping letters, we are certain, at once, that it is only banter on the 'Serenity of Idleness.' They occur in a letter to Mason. 'I discover charms in idleness that I never had a notion of before, and perceive that age brings pleasure as well as takes away. There is a *serenity* in having nothing to do that is delicious; I am persuaded that little princes assumed the title of "Serene Highness" from that sensation.—Your assured friend, HORACE LE FAINÉANT.'

If I might apply the words of Cicero in this sense—not their original one—it was the '*Indolentia naturæ*' which led Dr. Johnson to say that nothing but necessity ever made him work, for when he was not at work he was brooding over trouble, and oppressed by his constitutional malady, *scrofula*, or the King's evil, which no touch cured, for, as is well known, it was tried, but in vain.

As for 'laziness,' we all know what that is, and quite

understand the words of the late Archbishop Whately, in writing to a friend: 'Such is my natural laziness (which I believe you greatly underrate) that no taste for any subject ever yet did, or, I believe, ever will, bring me to set to *work* and systematically master it.' And yet who would like to live the life of a Mexican? 'In Mexico,' says a recent writer, 'nobody ever does anything without somebody else standing or sitting by, doing nothing.' Better be, says some wag, one of their '*caballeros de camino*,' which is just a highwayman!

But this is mere digression from my purpose.

At the same time it tells how great commanders were no soldiers of chance, but men who had steadily looked into the demands of their profession. As for the Duke of Wellington, he was comparatively young when this great battle was fought, so that one might have asked:

> The man
> Before you, with the scarcely wrinkled brow,
> And yet unsilver'd hair, can he have reached
> So soon the cloudy summits that command
> That spacious prospect which the hoary sage
> Scarce sees before he sinks into the grave?

About this time there were great discussions in Court circles on the matter of the Duke of Cumberland's marriage with a daughter of the reigning Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, niece to her Majesty, and relict of the Prince of Salmo-Braunfels. It was first celebrated at Berlin—afterwards at Carlton House on August 29. A curious circumstance attended it. 'The clerks of the parishes of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and St. James's in the city and liberty of Westminster attended to receive the registry of the marriage, as it so happens that Carlton House is in both the parishes. They also attended at the time of the baptism of the Princess Charlotte of Wales on the same account.'

I mention this circumstance here, as a parallel instance occurs at Onslow, not far from Hanwood and the old homestead of Meole, the property from which the earldom takes its title. Formerly the pump in the back kitchen divided the parishes of Ford and Pontesbury.

Old Edward Dyas, of Hanwood, said that the glass of

Onslow came from Stourbridge, where his kindred lived, and to whom he was in the habit of paying periodical visits and on his return telling wonderful stories about the glass manufacture there—all true enough, no doubt, as it is well known that Frenchmen were the originators of the trade there. 'A family by the name of Hennezel, with several relatives of the names of Tythary and Tyzale, settled' there in 158-, subsequent to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; 'and the French connection with the manufacture of glass is still continued, and even enlarged. The sand most used comes from Fontainebleau and vicinity, and costs on delivery about 1*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.* per ton.' It was not necessary to say to adventurous men like these—

> Begin betimes; occasion's bald behind;
> Slip not thine opportunity.

Industry always takes precedence. On the contrary—a wary magpie was just flying over the head of the venerable oak—put a spoon in the way of a magpie, and you will soon have *la gazza ladra*. It is opportunity, too, that makes the thief, as the Italian man has it in his proverb, like other nations have, '*La commodità fa l' uomo ladro*.'

On July 11 Parliament was prorogued by the Prince Regent with a speech from the throne, and, though the war was ended, it was an anxious time. Much needed to be done at home if peace was to be there.

In January this year wheat was 60*s.* 8*d.* per quarter. The highest mark was in April, when it reached 72*s.* 9*d.*; in December it came down to 55*s.* 9*d.* But, if it had been a trying time to the poor, so it had been to the agriculturist, and British commerce also had been quite thrown out of gear by the war. All this caused great depression in the country, and many failures among the farmers. It has been said that the number of farms thrown up was unprecedented; and yet landlords hardly knew how to lower their rents and pay their way.

Perhaps, after all, we may say with old Tusser:

> Who minds to quote
> Upon this note,

May easily find enough ;
What charge and pain
To little gain
Doth follow too long plough.

Yet farmer may
Thank God, and say :
For yearly such good hap
We'll farm the plough,
That sends enow
To stop so many a gap.

There had now been, all through harvest and up to September, and almost to the end of it, an unusually long period of dry weather, insomuch so that the Patches—the Cruckton meadows—and the Harrisals on the Rea-side were almost burnt up. The drought, in fact, was felt throughout the whole country, and the ponds were dry. 'Grass,' it is said, 'had become so universally scarce that the farmer was obliged to feed his cattle with hay, as in the severest winters. In consequence, an extraordinary quantity of cattle of every description had been sent to the provincial markets, which had considerably reduced the price of provisions.' Nor was it felt only in England, but it was reported that at Lisbon the springs which supplied the town were entirely dried up, and that the inhabitants had to send across the Tagus for water in barges.

One particular fact recalls this dry summer to my remembrance—the Spanish chestnuts ripened on the mound, or clump, in the Cruckton meadow, and my brother Henry and I gathered and ate them. This curious mound or barrow was mentioned in an earlier page of this work, and is very curious. Whether the chestnuts remain I do not know, but it is still covered with Scotch firs, the resort of wood-pigeons in winter, where we made cabins from which to shoot them as they do in Norway and Sweden, as Mr. Lloyd informs us.

The Spanish chestnut is certainly a very handsome tree, and one would think deserves cultivation. The terms 'castañázo,' a blow given by a chestnut flung at anyone, 'castañéta,' or castanets, used in dancing the *fandango* and

bolero, derived, as I suppose, from the crack of a chestnut burnt in the fire—a delicacy as old as Martial—

Lento castaneæ vapore tostæ—

and such titles as the Counts of Castagnana, show to what an extent it flourishes in Spain. Recollections of childhood and of the Valley of the Rea suggest such remarks.

And it seemed as if my Talking Friend almost envied these remarks on the chestnuts on the mound, for he said, 'You hardly guess at the age of oaks like myself, and, but for the information I have given you relative to my time-honoured father and myself, you would be as much in the dark as you are about the crags on Ponsert Hill and the Stiperstones. There are plenty of doddered oaks in the near road which saw the Conqueror come in, or "The Bastard," as they called him in those days of free speech!' And there was a rustling in his boughs as if he felt the effects of age.

And I bethought me of the old Shelton oak, close to Shrewsbury, and of the oaks of Sherbourn Park, 'most of them already relics of antiquity, when they sheltered Ralegh from the heat of some July sun,' and of other oaks, many at which I had looked up and wondered, and I realised the feelings of an American as he gazed at the oaks.

Within my recollection there were those living who could remember the old customs of St. Clement's Day, and would talk of them, though most of the mummeries and festive ceremonies were postponed till Christmas. According to the old monkish lines, St. Clement's, November 23, was the beginning of the winter season :

Dat Clemens hyemem; dat Petrus ver cathedratus;
Æstuat Urbanus; autumnat Bartholomæus.

'From a State proclamation in 1640,' says Mr. Hampson in his 'Medii Ævi Kalendarium,' it appears that processions of children were frequent on St. Clement's Day, and, in consequence of a still more ancient custom of perambulating the streets on the night of the festival to beg drink for carousing, a pot was formerly marked against the 23rd of November upon the old Runic or clog almanacs.'

At this time, certainly, and in these days, our country

people in the Valley of the Rea, on Saturday nights especially, were rather a *peg* too high than a *peg* too low, and if they knew nothing of the Rune-slab, for which they now used the 'tally,' they knew enough of the 'pot.' But the term 'pot of beer,' or 'pot of ale,' is much more common in the south of England now than it is in Shropshire. There is a proclamation of Henry VIII. to put an end to the mummeries of St. Nicholas, St. Catharine, St. Clement, and the Holy Innocents, from which it appears that 'children be strangeley decked and apparyled, to counterfeit priestes, bishoppes, and women, and so be ledde with songes and daunces, from house to house, blessing the people and gatheryng of money ; and boyes do singe masse, and preache in the pulpitt, with such other unfyttinge and inconvenient usages, rather to the derysyon than any trewe glorie of God, or honour of his saintes,' &c., &c. The mummers in the Valley of the Rea were common enough in my boyhood. In the south they are called 'tiptearers.'

On December 7 a great soldier met with an unworthy death—Marshal Ney, 'the bravest of the brave,' was shot. Many a brave soldier in England regretted his death, in expiation of his one great error ; and many a sailor too, like Captain Witts of Hanwood, often alluded to in these pages. He hardly liked to hear him called a traitor, for, as Napier said, he had fought five hundred battles for France. He lived like a soldier and died like a man!

> Though in our miseries fortune have a part,
> Yet in our noble sufferings she hath none ;
> Contempt of pain—that we may call our own.

But, like others, brave as he was, he still found it true that :

> 'Tis more easy
> To tie knots than unloose them.

We are amused now to read, under the date of December 10, 'A vessel is arrived in the Thames from New South Wales, after an extraordinary short passage of less than five months,' but much interest was taken in such an account at the old Homestead, for Dr. Townson, who gave some of the early accounts of Botany Bay and of Tasmania, was the uncle of Captain Witts, and from him we learned all the more

recent accounts of that now great country. Some of Dr. Townson's MSS. are still in my possession, but of no intrinsic value. An engraving of Dr. Townson himself, and one of the earliest of Botany Bay, hung upon the walls of the old Homestead for years, as well as a collection of very curious clubs and spears, which Dr. Townson collected in New Zealand. He lived for many years in Van Diemen's land, and died there, having amassed considerable property in different ways. He was well known in Copenhagen, Upsala, and Stockholm as a person far advanced in philosophical pursuits, and he had given great attention to the respiratory organs, using the poor frog in his demonstrations.

My Talking Friend informed me that about this time they had an early frost, which was followed by a great storm and floods, insomuch that the 'Argy' between Melveolg and Llanymynech was severely tried, and, had it broken down, great damage would have been the consequence. It is a curious term. Within a year or two Mr. Blakeway of the Hanwood Mills has thrown up an 'Argy' as a protection from the Rea, which is sometimes a 'horned flood.'

My old Chronicler was right as usual, for I pick out that on December 10 St. James's Park Canal was covered with skaters, and several lives were lost. The frost followed on a severe storm, which was severely felt at Amsterdam, and many ships were stranded in the Zuyder Zee. Southey, in a letter to his brother, Captain Southey, tells of a wonderful storm at Keswick on the 19th. The wind was nearly due south, and it took up the water of the lake literally like dust. We could see it beginning to rise up far under Brendelow, white as smoke or as a morning mist, gathering and growing all the way to the bottom of the lake, and then dispersed as far as the tempest could carry it. The report from the town was that slates were flying about there like crows.

Meanwhile, though the war was over, clouds were gathering, which greatly disturbed the nation, which could not complain of

> The cankers of a calm world, and a long peace.

It was the costs of war that had to be met, and there was the

great evil of thousands thrown out of employ, besides a soldiery with little to do. And, as usual, one disturbance gave rise to another, such as the difficulties with the sailors employed in the coal trade in the ports of Durham and Northumberland, who took 'entire possession of the river Tyne by a chain of boats which did not allow a vessel to put to sea without a regular permit.' Then, again, Ireland was in commotion, taking up this time the question of tithes and tithe proctors, reminding one vividly of Sir Walter Raleigh's poor account of it in a letter to Cecil, May 10, 1593, whose opinions were pretty much in accord with Spenser's in his 'View of the State of Ireland'—a treatise, together with Sir John Davies's, which may be profitably read even now. For, as a writer in the 'Annual Register' for this year aptly puts it, 'it is memorable that in the many years of disturbances in Ireland the particular subjects of grievance and views of the malcontents have been perpetually varying, so that it would seem that from some unfortunate cause, a spirit of resistance, in the mass of the people, to the established order of things is constantly in existence, ready to be called into operation on any occasion by which the passions are temporarily excited.'

And greatly were they excited now, and the people posted themselves on the Bridge of Clonmel and urged their fellows to lay aside all trifling feuds of Caravats and Shanavests and to resist tithes and tithe proctors, which was the immediate rallying-word; and without entering upon the question of religious differences and religious abuses on both sides, one may call to mind how the Lacedæmonian Chilon wished Cythera sunk in the sea, being the same eyesore to him and Sparta as Ireland has been to many for centuries. The reader of Herodotus will recollect how Demaratus counselled Xerxes to seize it, and thence to prosecute the war against Laconia. As we learn from Thucydides, the fears of Chilon were fulfilled when Nicias conquered it.

But there is no reason why Ireland should be drowned in the sea, and Spenser's words are wise words—'So have I often heard it wished also (even of some whose great wisdomes in opinion should seem to judge more soundly of so weighty a

consideration) that all that land were a sea-poole ; which kind of speech is the manner rather of desperate men farre driven, to wish the utter ruin of that which they cannot redress, than of grave counsellors which ought to think nothing so hard but that by thorough wisdome it may be mastered and subdued.'

It is not impossible that Spenser may have alluded here to the more than once expressed opinions of Raleigh, whom he loved so well. We still hope there may come a better day for the 'Emerald Isle,' but national prejudices are not easily overcome, and their law is not our law, but Brehon—'a rule of right unwritten, delivered by tradition from one to another.' But, as Silvanus Scory, a Londoner, a friend of Raleigh's, wrote to him dissuading him from the Guiana voyage :

Nothing on earth hath permanent abode,
Nothing shall languish under sorrow still ;
The Fates have set a certain period,
As well to those that do as suffer ill.

Restless, however, as Ireland was, England, we have seen, was in a ferment too ; and if peace and quietness were to be maintained within our borders, the arts of peace needed study, and the subject of education most of all, for, as Southey wrote during the war with America :

Thrones fall and dynasties are changed,
Empires decay and sink,
Beneath their own unwieldy weight ;
Dominion passeth like a cloud away,
The imperishable mind
Survives all meaner things.

The stern opponent of Napoleon's usurpations and aggrandisement never pressed these matters more than Southey, one of the great master minds of his age. He always looked upon Lord Brooke as one of the deepest thinkers of his time, and if the reader will turn to his 'Treatise of Monarchia' he will find these ruggedly wise lines under the section of 'Peace.'

Next and of more refined policy,
The founding is of these sweet nurseries,
Where knowledge and obedience multiply
The fame and sinews of great monarchies ;
As schools, which finely do between the sense
And nature's large forms, frame intelligence.

Unto which end in Achai, Athens, Creet,
Rhodes, Lacedæmon, and more, were erect
Illustrious states, and pædagogies meet,
By reason and example to protect
The coming ages from that barbarisme,
Which first breeds ignorance, and after schisme.

No doubt in all times of excitement men's mouths will be more or less filled with excuses, and many will neglect their own interests. 'There are too many flies in the house,' said a German peasant to his pastor, Dr. Bücksell, 'for me to get rest, but in the church it is fine and cool. In winter there's never any need why I should come.' And so, one way or another, till better taught, *our* peasants said of schools. But by degrees this tornado of fanatic ignorance blew itself out, and the people became better inclined as better taught.

And lamenting in his heart-of-oak way the many evils that he had seen in his day, clear and open to the eyes of all men, as Ponsert Hill was from his upper boughs, with the Stiperstones in the distance, my Talking Friend still maintained that age after age he had witnessed progressive improvement, and still hoped to do so, adding, 'A patriarchal tree like myself grows slowly, and real progress must be slow.' And I bethought me of those stanzas of the poet's 'Pilgrimage,' in which are faithfully set forth the 'Hopes of Man.'

And in the scale of nations, if the ways
Of Providence mysterious we may call,
Yet, rightly viewed, all history doth impart
Comfort and hope and strength to the believing heart.

For through the lapse of ages may the course
Of moral good progressive still be seen,
Through mournful dynasties of Fraud and Force,
Dark Vice and purblind Ignorance intervene;
Empires and nations rise, decay, and fall,
But still the good survives and perseveres through all.

Yea, even in those most lamentable times,
When everywhere to wars and woes a prey,
Earth seemed but one wide theatre of crimes,
Good unperceived hath worked its silent way;
And all those dread convulsions did but clear
The outstretched paths to give it free career.

CHAPTER LIV.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF GEORGE III., &C.

Faint not, and fret not, for threaten'd woe,
Watchman on Truth's grey height !
Few though the faithful, and fierce though the foe,
Weakness is aye Heaven's might.
NEWMAN'S *Poems* : *The Watchman*, p. 76.

Sic Natura jubet : velocius et citius nos
Corrumpunt vitiorum exempla domestica, magnis
Cum subeunt animos auctoribus.
JUV. *Sat.* xiv. 31.

Sunt enim omnia ista ex errorum orta radicibus: quæ evellenda et extrahenda penitus, non circumcidenda nec amputanda sunt.—CIC. *Tusc. Disp.* iv. 26.

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together : our virtues would be proud if our faults whipp'd them not ; and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues.—*All's Well that Ends Well*, act. iv. sc. iii.

Yet now days, weeks, and months but seem
The recollection of a dream,
So still we glide down to the sea
Of fathomless eternity.
MARMION, *Introd. to Cant.* ii.

IN many ways we shall find the year 1816 to be one of trouble and distress. The early part of it was wild and inclement. As my Talking Friend said, 'The wind was constantly either sobbing or roaring in Habberley Hole'—the cave of Æolus in these parts, as has been often noticed in these pages. In the north of England the floods were most destructive as they were also in the south of Scotland. As the year advanced, atmospheric turbulence rather increased than diminished, originating fear of a bad harvest, which, as we shall see, proved to be but too true. Many people, owing to the cessation of the war and other causes combined, and, at the least, the depression of agriculture, were thrown out of employ. In many parts of the kingdom regular employment was the exception.

The consequence was, great disturbances arose in Norfolk, Suffolk, Huntingdon, Cambridge, and in the Isle of Ely particularly, and the evil spread like the Greek-fire of old, or the more modern petroleum when ignited. As old Fuller says, remembering his Virgil and his Ovid, as they remembered old Hesiod of Ascra, in his 'Works and Days,'

> Fame did fly, fame that doth weare
> An hundred list'ning eares, an hundred eyes ;
> An hundred prating tongues, she dayly plies—
> Tongues that both tell the truth and tattle lies.

Then, again, in what has been called the 'Black Country'—at Tipton and Dudley, at Wednesbury and Bilston—the distress was great, and I can quite well recollect the poor colliers of Bilston drawing loads of coal, harnessed with ropes, to excite commiseration. Some even started for London, but were stopped on their way. Poor fellows! they were rough without being rough ; not insolent, like our modern roughs. Their coal was somewhat of an offering, like that of Hany, the Indian of Guiana, to Raleigh—'He brought great plenty of roasted mullets (which were very good meat), great store of plaintains and pine-apples, with pistachios (or ground nuts) and divers other sorts of fruit.'

The ironworks in Staffordshire suffered sadly, and furnaces were thrown out of blast—a much more serious affair in those days, before modern improvements, when it took a fortnight to light them again. A striking letter is inserted in the Chronicle to the 'Annual Register' of this year, entitled 'Distresses of the Iron Manufacturers in Staffordshire, Described in a Letter written by a Resident at Coseley, near Bilston.'

Things were no better in South Wales, especially at Newport, Merthyr Tydvil, Tredegar, and Swansea; and as for the furnaces in Shropshire, they could not be worse, as my Talking Friend heard from all the miners passing by, whether from Coalbrookdale, or Ketley, or elsewhere. What he said is fully corroborated by the extract following: 'By a recent statement it appears that in Shropshire, at this moment, there are twenty-four iron-furnaces out of blast, and only ten in blast. It also appears that the works of

Mr. Reynolds (the oldest family in the trade in the Shropshire district) have totally ceased ; and that out of thirty-four furnaces (each casting fifty tons of pig-iron per week, and each employing 300 men), only ten are at present in work, and of these the Coalbrookdale Company have given orders for the discontinuance of two ; and others must inevitably do the same, for it is estimated that the Company of Lilleshall has 5,000 tons of iron on hand, and the one at Madely Wood not less than 3,000. These extinguished works consumed not less than 8,000 tons of coal per week, so that a corresponding number of colliers are also destitute.' This brought them beneath the shade of the Old Oak, and some few found employment at Arlscott, Pontesbury, Asterley, and in the well-known lead-mines of Snailbeach, before alluded to. The distresses of these poor people were seen by all ; heard even as the solemn toll of the snow-white *campanero*, or bell-bird, in the forests of Guiana.'

It was Beaumarchais who said—but it is not always true, neither was it true now—'It is only idle people who cannot find time for everything.' These poor souls could not find work, and time hung heavy on their hands, especially on the hands of those who had families. The under-inscribed might rather have been written by him than by me.

Moi ! je suis Beaumarchais,
Le Wilkes Français !

It may be added that the state of the Spitalfields weavers —those Protestant strangers, Walloons and French, who settled hard by the Priory and Hospital of St. Mary Spittle, without Bishopsgate, and taught their art to the English after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and in whose hands the work now is—was equally bad. Even their poor birds and flowers, of which they were so fond, seemed to suffer with their masters. And the aged man said pretty much what Don Silva says in the 'Spanish Gipsey'—

I shall be no more missed
Than waves are missed, that leaping on the rock
Find there a bed and rest. Life's a vast sea
That does its mighty errand without fail,
Panting in unchang'd strength though waves are changing.

Those excellent ladies the Misses Hughes of the Ivy House at Hanwood, close to the church (kinder people never lived), took a lively interest in the poor Spitalfield weavers. Of Miss Mary, a votary of St. Catharine, a spinster lady, any good Roman Catholic would have said (though she did not love their creed), as the old Normans used to say, 'Elle restera pour coiffer Sainte Catarine'—she will not marry, but remain single to attire St. Catharine.

Equally kind in his way was old Mr. Richards, the silversmith by the Market Hall at Shrewsbury; always open to every appeal of distress. He retired when I was at Shrewsbury School, but always came from his house in the suburbs to help his neighbours on market-days; reminding waggish schoolboys of the story of the old tallow-chandler and the hurry of melting. But they good-humouredly quoted Martial's 'Epigram'—

> Qua nunc arte graves tolerabis inutilis annos?
> Quid facit infelix et fugitiva quies?

Whilst matters were in this disturbed state, and men were restless for want of labour, which not only keeps the body in health by ministering bread to its tissues and sinews, but also ballasts the mind and keeps in check its restlessness, religious disputations arose, which seldom do good. But, as an able historian says, 'There are humours in the body politic as in the human frame, that can only be cured by their own excess and festering, and must be worse before they are better. For health the imposthume must come to a head.'

Not only were the heads of our Faith canvassed, but throughout the length and breadth of the land meetings of all sorts were held in opposition to the Church of our fathers, and dissent was rabidly encouraged by those who had ulterior political views. And admitting that there may have been much slackness, and that Churchmen were cold, 'there is always this evil in the prevalence of dissent: it tends to make men indifferent to the sin of religious disunion, and to the duty of honouring in their minister, not the talents or the graces of the man, but the duly delegated authority of Christ.' There can be no doubt but at this time democracy was furthered under the guise of religion.

My Talking Friend told me that a sort of camp meetings were held on the side of Ponsert Hill, and the Welshmen, he said, as they passed on their way did scarcely anything else but talk of the Ranters who took such a hold on the Cymry, leading them at their will. Even the remote sides of Snowdon, Carnedd Llewelin, and Plinlimmon heard their voices and their hymns. And was this for good or for evil?

'The inhabitants of the north-west frontier of India,' says Sir Sidney Cotton, 'are all falconers, and the hunt of the deer and the antelope with falcons and greyhounds is considered (or was) the finest of sports. It is said of the falcons that "when they tower too high at the outset they are lost in the heavens, and seen no more."' And perhaps the application is not impertinent here, for, as fires of furze and straw soon burn out and consume themselves, so is it with intemperate zeal; and although the ashes of dullness always need blowing off, and the spirit of true religion must be stirred up in men's hearts, yet over-excitement is never a healthy sign. 'It is not,' says a holy man, 'in the flush of the cheek, or the more brilliant eye alone, in which you would recognise the returning health of the body. There might be fever, not health, there.' Perverts are usually bigoted and violent, and a religious mania seldom lasts long, even though it lay hold on a mind powerful as Archbishop Lanfranc's. I have seen half a dozen revivals die out. It may be five-and-forty years since I heard the Ranters in Brecknock.

As far as my experience goes, and as a close observer, I think little good has resulted from wild revivals—the rather much irreverence. Indeed, I am very much of Archbishop Whately's opinion on this head: 'To me it appears that Christianity is a very quiet and deliberate religion; it keeps the steam acting on the wheels instead of noisily whizzing out at the safety-valve.' It may be added that steam in excess tears the machinery, and oftentimes bursts the boilers. Over-excitement acts pretty much in the same manner on the human, especially on the female, frame, and hence the scenes that have occurred from Jerome's time till Wesley's.

The way in which revivals spread is remarkable. If one occurs in England in 1862, in the very same year we find one

in Lapland, of which a very curious account is given by the old Bagham, quite worth referring to. The scene of it was Jockmock. The old priest had been there forty years, and had never been at Lulea but once—altogether a parallel instance to Claudian's old man of Verona—

Qui patriis ævum transegit in arvis.

On the other side the Atlantic the wildfire of enthusiasm spreads even quicker than with us. Mr. Dixon's account of 'Spiritual Cycles' in his 'New America' is not less interesting than instructive, quite corroborating the late Dean Milman's remark that in all such religious movements the 'lees of human nature' must be stirred up.

A long digression this, but it bears upon the change called for at the end of a long war, during which, as Lord Clarendon observed in his well-known 'Essay,' 'the tenderness of nature and the integrity of manners' are 'driven away or powerfully discountenanced,' and 'instead thereof a roughness, jealousy, and distrust introduced, that make conversation unpleasant and uneasy; and the weeds that grow up in the shortest war can hardly be pulled up and extricated without a long and unsuspected peace.' The wise words of a very wise man!

We cannot all be wise; happy for me
That other people are.

Of course the Church was called upon to extend her arms, as was the case of St. Paul's in the early days above referred to, in the well-known words of the prophet: '*Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.*' And surely the time was come; and, no doubt, on January 18—the day of a general thanksgiving to Divine Providence for the re-establishment of peace in Europe—such thoughts as these were uppermost in the minds of all good men, and the voice of the many preachers only sounded forth the words of that old bell in Worcester Cathedral:

I sweetly touling, men do call,
To taste on meat that feeds the soul.

One there was above all others who lifted up his voice at

the time for the improvement of the people, and whose words were heard—the lamented Robert Southey—insomuch so that he wa called upon by those in power to come forth from his retirement amongst the mountains, and to help them in London. But he thought he could do more good where he was, and there he remained, the wise counseller, to the end of his days. And well it was he did not go, for on April 17 died his marvellous boy Herbert, the joy of his heart and the delight of his eyes. Thoughtfully plaintive are the words he wrote to his old and tried friend Grosvenor Bedford : 'I have sent Edith May to Wordsworth's. Poor child, she is dreadfully distressed ; and it has ever been my desire to save my children from all the sorrow that can be avoided, and to mitigate, as far as possible, what is inevitable. Something it is to secure for them a happy childhood. Never was a happier than Herbert's. He knew not what unkindness or evil were, except by name. His whole life was passed in cheerful duty, and love, and enjoyment. If I did not hope that I have been useful in my generation, and may still continue to be so, I could wish that I also had gone to rest as early in the day ; but my childhood was not like his.'

And so he sojourned still amongst the mountains, and suggested almost all the improvements which have since been adopted for the bettering of the people.

In the month of February this year—on the 2nd—earthquakes were felt in Lisbon and Madeira—mentioned here, as more than one occurred later on in England and Scotland. In the valley of the Rea it was wild and stormy enough, as my Talking Friend said before, and on the 21st of this month there was an avalanche at Applethwaite, by Keswick.

It was on the 1st that the Prince Regent's speech on the opening of Parliament was delivered by commission ; and on the 9th Mr. Brougham brought forward his motion relative to the treaty concluded at Paris on September 26 last year between Austria, Russia, and Prussia, since so well known by the name of 'The Holy Alliance.' The original draft of this curious document was on a sheet of foolscap, and, strangely enough, found its way to the Duke of Wellington's dispatch box. I think it still remains amongst his collection of MSS.

I recollect speaking to the late Mr. Montgomery Martin about it, as well as about the secret articles of the Treaty of Tilsit, which justified our seizure of the Danish shipping—if anything could justify that act. But the matter has been discussed before, and one might say to me

> Will you again unknit
> The churlish knot of all abhorred war.

Better tell the story of old Jim Tummas of Habberley, whom my Talking Friend well recollected as he journeyed to and from Shrewsbury. He was an old Peninsular soldier, and many a tale had he for the amusement of his fellows o' Saturday nights. Hard scrambling he said it was at St. Sebastian, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Badajos; and at the latter he was wounded. But, as it happened, all the severest wounds he received were in the rear, at which the Snailbeach lead-miners would have their laugh. Even kind old Mr. Jones, the primitive parson of Habberley in those days, used to joke him on the subject. But old Jim had his ready reply, and would say—for there was a dash of Cymry in the country parson's speech—'Those were the times we wanted you to preach to us in Welsh and English, for there was no understanding those Spaniards!' I was reminded of this story, told to me on the spot, in reading the account of Sven Anderson, the bear-hunter, in Lloyd's 'Scandinavian Adventures,' who had been severely hugged, but 'all his injuries were on the after part of his person, so that many a laugh was subsequently raised at his expense; and, like Jim Tummas, he bore it well.

Having been kindly treated under his wounds by the Peninsular surgeons of the day, he always bore testimony to their worth, and doubted if the parish doctor looked half so well after the poor at home. After all, the country had many quacks and hedge-surgeons; and somewhere about this date Richard Glover, an old servant of the homestead on the Rea, not being perhaps very sober, was thrown out of a cart and severely hurt.

However unpopular the Prince of Wales might be, there was a strong feeling in favour of his daughter, the Princess

Charlotte Augusta, throughout the whole country, extending even into the valley of the Rea. It was about this time—March 16—that a message was laid before the House by the Regent relative to her marriage with His Serene Highness Prince Leopold, and eventually a grant of 60,000*l.* per annum for their establishment was agreed to. A Bill of Naturalisation passed both Houses on the 28th.

Fortunate was it that all obstacles to the marriage were at last got rid of, and, as it is known, they were many. Some said it was not with the wish of the French Court, and that Talleyrand was at his sly tricks—a man of all others most disliked, and one of whom Miss Berry would have said, with Kent in 'Lear'—

> No contraries hold more antipathy
> Than I, and such a knave.

It was in March that she dined with him at Pozzo di Borgo's, in Paris, and speaks of him in a letter thus: 'Talleyrand! Could you see him! such a mass of moral and physical corruption as he appears in my eyes, inspiring me with sentiments so far from those with which I look up to great minds and great exertions, that I should be very sorry to be obliged to express what I feel about him.' So she wrote on the 15th, and then again on the 17th: 'The dinner was of twenty-six or twenty-seven people, but almost all Talleyrand's gang, headed by that old incarnation of corruption itself.' Strong words these from the mouth of an elegant woman.

Certainly there could have been no greater contrast than between the King of the Belgians and Talleyrand, whose long-talked-of memoirs, when they appear (if ever they do appear on the expiration of the time he specified), no one will believe—that man of moody silence, when it pleased him, reminding one of the Spanish proverb, 'De hombre que no habla y de can que no ladra, guardate mucho, porque de ordinario son traidores.'

Throughout the month of March the Army and Navy Estimates occupied the attention of the House, and all wished for necessary retrenchment. But, beyond all, the country and the City desired the abolition of the Property Tax, and

on the 18th the division was against it. For its continuance, 201 ; against it, 238. 'When the result was announced a long and loud cheering arose in the House, which was re-echoed by the crowd that filled the lobby and avenues ; and the event was felt in general throughout the nation as a relief from an oppressive burden, not, perhaps, so galling from its mere weight (for heavy burdens *must* be borne) as from its manner of imposition.' Next followed the discussions on agricultural distress, and Mr. Brougham's speech on this point commanded the attention of all parties. He dated the improvements in agriculture from 1792, and looked for greater.

As for the valley of the Rea, though my Talking Friend said that year after year improvement was progressive, there was still great room for it, and much land was undrained, and frequented by 'wisps of snipes,' which might have been brought into cultivation—it has been since—neither were our roads in good condition at all, and the lanes were all but impassable. The κελευθοποιοὶ παῖδες—road-makers, or the children of Macadam—were yet to arise. As for the turnpike road between the old homestead and Shrewsbury, it is enough to say—

> Not being the worst
> Stands in some rank of praise.

On the 17th of this month an earthquake was felt throughout many of the midland counties of England ; but my Talking Friend did not recollect that his roots were shaken by it, neither was it felt in the coalpits nor in the lead mines at Snailbeach. Later in the year, on August 13, another severe shock was felt in Scotland—at Aberdeen, Perth, Dunkeld, &c. At Inverness the church steeple was injured and the bells set ringing in private houses. An account of it is given in the natural history portion of the 'Annual Register.' The reader may call to mind Tennyson's lines in the 'Princess' :—

> But Ida with a voice, that like a bell
> Tolled by an earthquake in a trembling tower,
> Rang ruin, answered full of grief and scorn.

Or perhaps he will more readily recollect the lines of Shakespeare :—

> Diseased nature oftentimes breaks forth
> In strange eruptions ; and the teeming earth
> Is with a kind of colic pinched and vexed,
> By the imprisoning of unruly wind
> Within her womb, which for enlargement striving
> Shakes the old beldam earth and topples down
> Steeples and moss-grown towers.

It is the philosopher that speaks in the familiar lecturer, not the poet. 'The displacement of pressure, resulting in a state of strain in the strata at certain points, gradually increasing to the maximum they can bear without disruption,' is the cause of earthquakes, of which none know the awe-inspiring sensation save those who have felt a severe one.

Meanwhile the Roman Catholics were on the alert, and on April 26 Sir J. Newport introduced his motion concerning the state of Ireland. At the same time Sir Henry Parnell presented a petition from the Roman Catholics complaining that they were debarred from the free constitution of their realm—a petition followed by many others. It was on June 21 that the Bishop of Norwich—then considered the great Liberal of the day, uttered these very remarkable words :—

'It has been asked' (said his lordship) 'as a triumphant objection, Would we pull down the bulwarks of our faith? Would we remove the defensive guard of our religion? Would we shake the pillars of our Church? Impressed with those feelings that became his situation, he would give a short answer. The only way to secure permanently the existence of any establishment, civil or ecclesiastical, was to evince liberal and conciliatory conduct to those who differed from us, and to lay its foundation in the love, affection, and esteem of all within its influence. This was the true life-work of our Church; with this it was secure against all danger; without this every other security was futile and fallacious.'

Was the Bishop of Norwich in advance of his day on the Roman Catholic question? The problem has still to be solved.

On May 2 took place the marriage of the Princess Charlotte with Prince Leopold, at Carlton House, and the whole nation rang again with 'vobis omnibusque et precibus.' Oh!

how near are tears and great joy, marriage and death. The epilogue to the Lay of the Laureate appeared afterwards quite ominous :—

> Is that the nuptial song? with brow severe,
> Perchance the votaries of the world will say;
> Are these fit strains for royal ears to hear?
> What man is this who thus assorts his lay
> And dares pronounce with inauspicious breath,
> In hymeneal verse, the name of Death?

It was on the 8th of this month that Earl Stanhope proposed his motion for the revision of the Statute Book. His name recalls another which was well known in the old town hard by, and much spoken of by the Miss Kynastons of the Crescent—that of Lady Hester Stanhope, Pitt's closest intimate, of whom we heard so much in after-years as well as from my old acquaintance 'Eothen.' She was now, it was said, at the head of three tribes of the Bedoweens, or Bedouin Arabs, and she gave it out publicly that she would never leave the land of the sun again to come and breathe hard in the fogs of England.

How many years afterwards was it that I made the extract which follows? They are her own burning words from the East :—

'Had I been an English peer do you suppose I would have allowed the Duke of York's debts to remain unpaid? I should have laid down a large sum and engaged my brethren to have done the same. If it had not succeeded, I should have broken my coronet and have considered myself of neither greater nor smaller importance than the sign of a duke's head in front of a public-house.' Thus spoke out the woman like old Queen Bess when she said in her wrath, 'I'll teach them to know that I am of the masculine and feminine and neuter gender too!'

In taking down some old walls in Shrewsbury about this time several old coins were found by the workmen and hawked about the country before the discovery was known. Probably they were of no great value, or such antiquarians as Blakeway, Owen, and Rowlands—a memorable trio, beloved by all on 'gentle Severn's sedgy bank'—would have got hold

of them ; still they were talked of under the Old Oak ; and upon this occasion my father showed us his bag of coins—not many, but collected with some care, and which I never saw after his death. Not improbably this gave me my first love for coins, which helped me in my classical studies ; and I can now say with Mr. Douglas, in the preface to his 'Nenia Britannica, or sepulchral history of Great Britain,' 'The study of antiquity, instead of being accounted the dreg, should be styled the alembic, from which is drawn the purity and perfection of literature. The inscriptions on the medals are the only facts which can obviate error and produce the substitutes for deficiency of ancient records ; when these are wanting, in vain will the human mind be gratified by the most acute investigation.

Two very different, but very remarkable, men died about this time. On July 4 Dr. Watson, of Landaff, passed away. His collection of theological tracts may still be referred to advantageously, albeit some thought he had a leaning towards Socinianism. When he published his 'Apology for the Bible'—it was in 1796—in reply to Paine's 'Age of Reason' the reply of the good old King became notorious : 'Apology ! apology ! he never heard that the Bible wanted an apology.' He was born at Heversham, near Kendal, and his favourite residence was Calgarth, in Westmoreland. Since his day bishops have lived more in their dioceses. Heversham calls to the mind of old Shrewsbury boys the late Robert Wilson Evans, an early pupil of Bishop Butler. He was vicar.

On the 7th died Richard Brinsley Sheridan. His wonderful speech on Warren Hastings' trial was spoken of by those who heard it in my younger days, and we could all repeat the words of Byron's monody :—

> When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
> Arose to heaven in her appeal to man,
> His was the thunder—his the avenging rod,
> The wrath, the delegated voice of God—
> Which shook the nations through his lips and blazed
> Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised !

In those days many gipsies frequented the neighbourhood,

and I can well recollect how they went and came within reach of the old homestead. The Sibberscott Lane was one of their common haunts. The most I ever saw together were at Sir John Wrottesley's, near Tettenhall, in Staffordshire ; a very favourite spot—

Where thick-locked boughs shut out the tell-tale sun.

They are alluded to here because answers to questions relative to the number of gipsies in England were returned at this time. Their origin may be yet doubtful, but they are believed to be from Hindustan.

Still, up to this time the weather was almost unremittingly bad. Hardly ever, indeed, was such atmospheric disturbance known, and my Talking Friend said the whole valley of the Rea was a dense mass of clouds. An unprecedented fall of rain seems to have deluged the neighbourhood of Stafford and Stone on Sunday afternoon, the 20th, and on the following days ; in the neighbourhood of Lichfield incalculable damage was done to the hayfields. It was on the 28th that the fearful storm occurred at Longpark, reported in the 'Carlisle Journal,' and inserted in the 'Annual Register Chronicle.' In the earlier part of the same month—the 19th—the 'Journal de Paris' reported a fall of stones in a garden at Steinenburg, near Bonn, on the Lower Rhine, of which one was said to have weighed 100 pounds, others from twenty to forty pounds.

Meanwhile another year—that of 1817—with the old sexton Time at the head of it, is come in, and as Cotton Mather is made to say by Longfellow, having, no doubt, in his mind that magnificent passage in Jeremy Taylor's 'General Considerations preparatory to Death'—

I never hear the striking of a clock
Without a warning and an admonition
That time is on the wing, and we must quicken
Our tardy pace in journeying heavenward,
As Israel did in journeying Canaanward.

How short and expressive are that grand old divine's words : 'The clock strikes and reckons on our position of eternity.' Good reader, if you have that striking treatise at hand in which

these words occur, turn to it and read it again, and if thou art sickly or advanced in years, and the machinery of the body is 'entangled like the wheels of a broken clock,' it will do thee good, and not distress thee. In a Christian sense, as he meditates on years, months, days, and minutes, how well might one who is striving to redeem the time, and fetch up lost way, apply the lines of Martial :—

> Nunc vivit sibi neuter, heu, bonosque
> Soles effugere, atque abire sentit,
> Qui nobis pereunt et imputantur.
> Quisquam, vivere cum sciat, moratur?

Those words in capitals the old Shrewsbury boy will recollect on the dial-plate of All Souls', in days when the silence of the quadrangle was appalling.

It was within a few days from the beginning of the year, as my Talking Friend reminded me—and after this time, and indeed before, my own recollections are pretty fresh –that a thick, large-flaked, drifting snow came up from Habberley Hole, which lies south-south-west, and is our stormy point, so often mentioned in these pages ; but it soon passed off, as snow in large flakes usually does. It is curious that if on the south coast of England a snowstorm comes up either from the south or the south-west it blinds the fish ; a curious fact, as I have known and seen, but which I never heard accounted for. The fish I myself saw affected with snow-blindness, all dead, were picked up on the Worthing, West Tarring, and Hove beach.

This year, it must be admitted, began with trouble, and the state of the country was dangerous, though we could not quite say with the satirist—

> Nunc patimur longæ pacis mala : sævior armis
> Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur orbem.

The coming storm showed itself in the offing at the end of 1816, and the sudden change from the conflicts of a long war to a general peace produced a great change in society and in the feelings of the people long pressed by heavy burdens, and with plenty of disaffected advisers ready to say—

> Who would fardels bear
> And grunt and sweat under a weary life?

Lucan's lines were not more applicable to his own days than to these :—

> Non erat is populus, quem pax tranquilla juvaret,
> Quem sua libertas immotis pasceret armis.
> Inde iræ faciles, et quod suasisset egestas,
> Vile nefas &c.

It is noted that on January 8 there was so dense a fog in London that candles were lighted in every shop and counting-house, and my Talking Friend reported the same of the valley of the Rea about this time. It was scarcely ever clear after that thick snow-storm till a gale later on seemed to sweep away the oppression of the atmosphere. Would that it could have brushed off the discontents of the people, on whose shoulders, nevertheless, all the blame did not lie. 'Everyone this January and February,' added my time-honoured chronicler, 'was susceptible to cold, ready to take it in a sort of influenza form from any stranger that might pass and repass.' Tristan d'Acunha and St. Kilda were not more ready to drink in the coming infection from a distance. Of the former the reader will see an account in the 'Cruise of the Galatea' and in Dr. Johnson's 'Tour to the Hebrides.' Boswell, like Sancho Panza, seemed to have a longing for an island, and once talked of buying it.

But to return.

Parliament met on January 28, and on February 3 the Prince Regent called the attention of both Houses to the dangerous state of the country. On his return from the House on the 28th the glass of his carriage was broken, but whether by a stone or by two balls from an air-gun seems uncertain. The reports from the Secret Committee of both Houses 'to inquire into certain meetings and combinations endangering the public tranquillity' was made on February 18 and 19. A paper circulated by the Union Society and Spencean Philanthropists — they took their name from one Spence, a schoolmaster in Newcastle—thus describes their objects, so like the agrarian tendencies of 1869: 'A parochial partnership in land, on the principle that the landholders are not proprietors in chief; that they are but the stewards of the public; that the land is the

people's farm ; that landed monopoly is contrary to the spirit of Christianity and destructive of the independence and morality of mankind.' So spoke our modern Gracculi.

Wilberforce, writing to his wife under February 8, says that 'the seizing of the ringleaders on Sunday last prevented bloodshed from the Spa Fields mob on Monday. Hunt seems a foolish, mischief-making fellow, but no conspirator, though the tool of worse and deeper villains. Cobbett is the most pernicious of all ; but God will bless and prosper, I fear not ; and it is highly gratifying that all the truly religious classes have nothing to do with the seditious proceedings. The blasphemous songs and papers of the seditious will disgust all who have any religion or any decency.'

At this time it was that Southey was called upon by the Government to assist them, as one whose known opinion was that 'the best way of ameliorating the condition was in the established institutions of the country.' The Ministry could not help him, but he, for his own country's sake, and as a real patriot, was willing to help them, and he did so, through the pages of the 'Quarterly Review,' in an article entitled Rise and Progress of Popular Disaffection, written, said Wilberforce, who at that time did not know who wrote it, 'with a pen of fire.' He called it his '*papel forte*,' but lamented that it was grievously cut down and emasculated by Gifford. It is reprinted in his 'Essays, Moral and Political.' None knew better than he the force of the English proverb, 'Soft words break no bones' ; but as Sir John Malcolm's friend he also knew the Persian one and when to apply it, 'A soft file will not cleanse deep-seated rust.' Not one was he to despair of the fortunes of the kingdom or to say with Demea :—

> Ipsa si cupiat Salus
> Servare prorsus non potest hanc familiam.

The rather, he was ready to say with George Wither, in his 'Abuses Stript and Whipt,' an author he wished to see reprinted :

> I have a heart, I hope, shall ne'er despair,
> Because there is a God, with whom, I trust,
> My soul shall triumph when my body 's dust.

It is well known how he was railed against and called

renegade and pensioner of State, and all other sorts of names; but it is as well known now (albeit modern intriguers against Church and State try to keep his name under) how almost every improvement he suggested has been carried out, and that, like Wilberforce, he was one of the great benefactors of society. Mr. William Smith was made to tingle for saying:

The patriot's virtue for a place is sold.

Constantly pressing the education of the people and the improvement of the lower orders, it was in this '*papel forte*' that he said: 'Formerly the people were nothing in the scale; we are hurrying on towards the time when they will be everything.' Therefore he argued that their social condition must be raised; a subject entered upon in that most instructive work, 'The Progress and Prospects of Society,' published so many years after in times equally trying, but scarcely thought of now.

In this same paper he says, having himself honestly acceded to the conclusion, after much reasoning with himself: 'The Church of England is vitally and inseparably connected with the State, and they who are discontented with it are but half Englishmen.' Old Archdeacon Butler, of the old town of Shrewsbury, so well known in the valley of the Rea, a plain-spoken man, and one who would have called Ritualism a travesty on the old miracle drama, used to say that he never could tolerate a bastard Churchman—a strong phrase, but with much truth in it. For myself I can truly say with St. Jerome, 'Omnia contra Ecclesiam dogmata reprehendo, et publica voce condemno.' Better come into the church than stand profanely hanging about the church door!

There is a fable that I once did read
Of a bad angel, that was some way good,
And therefore on the brink of heaven he stood,
Looking each way, and no way could proceed;
Till at the last he purged away his sin
By loving all the joy he saw within.

Looking to parochial changes and parochial indifference, and to what is going on as I write, March 1869, what Southey said of our forefathers in his '*papel forte*' is vastly important: 'The rank among the nations which by their valour they

have won for us we are bound resolutely to maintain; the liberties which by their virtues they have bequeathed to us we are bound religiously to preserve; the institutions which in their wisdom they have found for us we are bound faithfully to uphold, that our children after us may inherit those privileges and blessings which have been our happy inheritance.'

I can well call to mind the boisterous meetings of those days, and it is painful to remember now, looking to the present suspension of the Habeas Corpus in Ireland, how both Houses were obliged to vote for it at this time—in February and June. The Hon. Henry Grey Bennet, on whose name there was a blot afterwards, but one of our borough members at that time, said he 'should oppose, in some stage, this arbitrary, impolitic, and uncalled-for measure.' This was in February, when he was called to order by Lord Castlereagh for speaking of 'ministers who had already imbrued their hands in the blood of their country, and who had been guilty of the most criminal cruelties.' Language like this was not likely to do good. It would only inflame the passions of the people. Francis Horner, their advocate, and the advocate of liberty, but not of licence, who died about this time, February 8, at Pisa, whither he had gone for his health, would not have used it. No common, but a very talented man, the contemporary of Jeffrey, Sidney Smith, Lord Brougham, &c. at Edinburgh.

So wise, so young, they say, do ne'er live long.

On the night of February 8 there was a wonderful display of the Aurora borealis, which illumined the whole valley and the neighbourhood, being most conspicuous at Derby and thereabouts. I cannot now tell if it was a Sunday night; but if it was, it was seen at Wolverhampton, and it was the first of Nature's marvellous pyrotechnics I ever saw, the November meteors being not yet noticed, but only St. Lawrence's tears, on August 10. We were coming out of what was then called the New Church—St. John's—and our usher, a Mr. Hutton, very kind to me, called my attention to what he was enraptured with. I most likely took it at first for a fire. Afterwards I thought I had never seen such colouring

except in the rainbow or in the plumage of that marvellous bird, the bird of Paradise, at the old homestead at Meole, brought by Colonel Wood from the East, and afterwards worn as a headdress ; so that an old fashion has come in again. The curious reader may see all about these birds in Bickmore's 'East Indian Archipelago,' called there—that is, in Papua, or New Guinea, Celum, and Amboina—*bolondinata*, or birds of Goa, which the Portuguese translated into '*aves de Paraiso*.' They sent the first ever seen in Europe to the Emperor Charles V.

It was on March 27 that Lord Sidmouth issued his questionable letter to the Lords Lieutenants of the counties of England and Wales, to stop the circulation of blasphemous and seditious pamphlets. The subject was brought before the Lords on May 12, but not before the Commons till June 25 by Sir Samuel Romilly. About endeavouring to put down such abominations there was no question, but it was on the way of putting them down that

Verborum tanta cadit vis.

A very different matter interested many at this time—I mean the retirement of John Philip Kemble, whom I remember, from the stage, on March 29—he who could act Falstaff without padding, and of whom it might have been said, concerning many of his celebrated parts, in those words of the 'Mostellaria' :—

Virtute formæ id evenit, te ut deceat quidquid habeas.

He had often visited Shrewsbury, and, I believe, assisted the two Crisps, John and Charles. 'After going through the round of the chief party,' writes Lockhart, 'to the delight of the Edinburgh audience, he took his final leave of them as Macbeth, and in the costume of that character delivered a farewell address, penned for him by Scott. No one who witnessed that scene, and heard the lines on that night, can ever expect to be again interested to the same extent by anything occurring within the walls of a theatre.'

My schoolboy recollection of these lines has never been effaced :—

Higher duties crave
Some space between the theatre and the grave,
That, like the Roman in the Capitol,
I may adjust my mantle e'er I fall ;
My life's brief act in public service flown,
The last, the closing scene, must be my own.

The old Shrewsbury boy at once applied to him that line in the 'Hecuba'—

πολλὴν πρόνοιαν εἶχεν εὐσχήμως πεσεῖν.

My Talking Friend told me that on two days this year, which may be referred to now, the road was thronged with people from Minsterley and Pontesbury on their way to Shrewsbury, February 20, and St. George's Day, April 23 ; gala days, on which the Queen's and the Prince Regent's birthdays were celebrated, and days on which even serious-thoughted people were willing to say—

Pallentes procul hinc abite curæ ;
Quidquid venerit obvium, loquamur,
Morosa sine cogitatione.

For the intent was a good one, as it was to relieve the distress of the manufacturing classes, and those who attended court were to appear in dresses entirely of British make. The account of the Queen's illness, which altered one day, had not reached the old town, and so all went on bravely, and the bells of St. Chad's rang out a merry peal, and were heard on the Hanwood banks. And I call to mind some lines I read, not very long ago, in Robert Lytton's 'Chronicles and Characters' :—

As when
On festive days, with pomp processional
And minstrelsing, and dancing maids and men,
Some merry-making city pours through all
Her gaping gates a jubilant swarm ; when sound
Among the humming hills is sometimes heard ;
When gorges open, and then blast again,
Sudden, i' the shifting vale, with all its train
Of mirthful tumult manifold, and drowned
In such deep silence that the hooting bird
That haunts by mountain tarns is audible
Far off once more, and audible alone,
In the reinstated stillness, with stern tone
Chiding the solitary air.

There died early in April this year, the 11th, a well-known literary character, appreciated by good Mr. Blakeway, of St. Mary's, as a scholar and as a pioneer to old books—William Belse—some time one of Mr. Parr's pupils, and therefore well known to Bishop Butler. I mention him here as joint editor with Mr. Nares, of the 'British Critic,' to which, in after-years, I contributed many articles, until it fell into hands of Romanistic tendency. His 'Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce Books,' six volumes, octavo, though his translation of Herodotus is little worth, may be consulted with advantage, and I recollect how he tells us, under 'Gesta Alexandri Magni,' that it is in this poet that the trite verse so often quoted is found :—

Incidis in Scyllam cupiens vitam Charybdim.

It was late in this month that the old Welsh fisher-folk, in their blue wadmál jackets, carrying mussels in their panniers, reported, as they passed under the Old Oak, a sad accident that had occurred on the Llackara Sands, in Carmarthen, where no less than twelve persons were drowned as they were gathering cockles. A fog came on which bewildered them at their work. It was a pathetic story for Southey or for Wordsworth. 'A little girl, only fourteen, was found kneeling with her hands folded across her bosom, close to her father's dead body. The sea was so calm and the tide flowed in so quietly that the men were found with their hats on.' It must have been still indeed, and Byron must have seen a sea as still when he thus began the 'Giaour' :—

The breath of air to break the wave
That rolls below the Athenian's grave.

On May 9 the Roman Catholic question was again mooted by Mr. Grattan and Mr. W. Elliott. It was in his peroration, at the close of the debate, that he made use of these remarkable words : 'When I see Britain grown up into a mighty empire ; when I behold her the head of the nations of the earth ; when I contemplate her power and majesty, I own that I am deeply astonished to find her descending from her elevation to mix in the disputes of schoolmen and the wrangling of theologians, who, while they seek for their own

purposes to torture their countrymen, endanger the security of their common country.' The majority against the motion was only twenty-four, and so each party said as usual :—

Nil mihi vis et vis cuncta licere tibi ;

or, as old Jack Gidwell said of his little bantam hen, 'she takes all to herself, and will let the cock have nothing.'

At the end of the month, the 30th, Mr. Charles Abbott, afterwards Lord Colchester, resigned the post of Speaker of the House, which he had filled so well, finding his health could not stand it. On June 2 the Right Hon. Charles Manners Sutton was chosen, against Mr. Charles Wynn, by 312 votes to 150. The reason it is mentioned here is because it created some sensation in the valley of the Rea, where the name of 'Sire Watkin, as King in Wales,' was very familiar. Charles Wynn lived at that lovely spot, Llangeiwyn. One of the loveliest walks I ever took in my life was from Oswestry over the hills to Llanfilin, taking Llangadwyn by the way. As his friend wrote :—

There was a heavenly virtue in the air
Which laid all vain, perplexing thoughts to rest,
And healed and calmed and purified the heart.

As the year advanced the country was no quieter—even the valley of the Rea, owing to the increase of coal-pits in it, was brought to know what was going on in Staffordshire, and in the Black Country generally, to say nothing of Kitley, which is nearer, and was in those days called the 'East Country.' It was with a view to still the rising storm that the Regent's message was delivered to both Houses, 'relative to the continuance of practices, meetings, and combinations tending to subvert the peace of the realm.' The second report of the Secret Committee was as unfavourable as the first. Watson's trial began on June 10, and continued till Monday 16th, when the jury pronounced him 'not guilty.'

At this time Joseph Sturge attended the corn market, still at Shrewsbury, every week, an honest man whose 'very broad hat' commanded my attention. He was the man of all others to press the greatest caution in the production of samples, and used the old word 'dubbing' for dishonesty in

such matters. Nothing but what was of the best would suit the markets of Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool, for which he purchased largely.

On July 9 Mr. Wilberforce, that faithful man, again rose in the House to bring forward his motion relative to the foreign slave trade; a point which I was never likely to forget as long as the Rev. Charles Peters, rector of the second portion of Pontesbury lived, and who had been there as a chaplain, and interested himself in the question till his death. Notwithstanding difficulties in the way, Mr. Wilberforce's address to the Prince Regent was agreed to without opposition. The King of Spain's prohibition, which was to come in force May 31, 1820, was issued in the December of this year. It was at this time that Wilberfore entered again into correspondence with that remarkable man, Christophe, of Hayti, as remarkable in his way as Toussaint l'Ouverture, on whom Wordsworth wrote his well-known sonnet, and thus wrote hopefully to Randolph, of Roanoke, a remarkable man, also, whom I knew personally when accredited to the Court of the Emperor of All the Russias at St. Petersburg, and who told me that the last blood of Pocahontas ran in his veins, appealing to Scipio, his slave. To him wrote Wilberforce: 'It produces quite a youthful glow through my whole frame to witness before I die in this and in so many other instances the streaks of religious and moral light illuminating the horizon, and though now but the dawning of the day cheering us with the hope of meridian glories.' They are the words of Wordsworth in another sonnet:—

> O ye heavens, be kind,
> And feel, thou earth, for this afflicted race!

On July 12 the session ended with a speech by the Prince Regent, in which a special allusion was made in it to the 'prospect of an abundant harvest throughout a considerable portion of the Continent,' which was so far realised that wheat, which at the beginning of the year stood at 103*s.* 1*d.* the quarter, fell to 84*s.* 6*d.* in December.

Towards the end of August this year the weather was wild and stormy, and some late oats and barley suffered. The chief damage, however, was felt on the Scottish coast,

where several boats were lost off Helmsdale, that great point of the herring fishery, so well known to me in after-years as the residence of my relative, that excellent sportsman, H. W. Meredith, at Torish Lodge, close by. I have more than once told Messrs. Longmans that it would be a profitable speculation if they could only get hold of his diaries as a naturalist. They would be a great addition to Charles St. John's 'Natural History and Sport in Moray,' for he could tell with him, amongst other things, 'from close observation I found that the old woodcock carries her young, even when larger than a snipe, not in her claws, which seem quite incapable of holding any weight, but by clasping the little bird tightly between her thighs, and holding it tight towards her body.'

As may be seen in the earlier pages of this local history, there had always been a connection between Shrewsbury and Worcester, and the story of the old glover may be turned back to, with reference to which time I may add in a note some accounts of prices in the time of Edward III., since discovered.

The reason of my referring to it now is that my Talking Friend told me that in October this year there was a great disturbance there, and that William Morris, of Pontesbury, was there at the time. It originated, he said, on the matter of the Pitchcroft—a name familiar to me in the Parliamentary War—an open field on which the freeman had a limited right to depasture cattle from time immemorial, and which had been encroached upon. A meeting had been held at the Hop-pole Inn in August, and the encroachments were to be removed by September 25. Some want of judgment caused the disturbance of October, which resulted in the Worcestershire Yeomanry cavalry being called in. Happily the riot was quelled, but nothing could show more clearly the determination of the people to maintain their rights of common. The reader of Henry VI. will remember Lord Suffolk sends his own name in the second petitioners' complaint 'against the Duke of Suffolk for enclosing the commons of Melford.' And my Talking Friend said, 'Much as I like to see improvements, and our lands drained, I still could wish that

a good, open green were reserved for all villagers and for every town in the land.'

It was about this time that the restoration of churches began—not very auspiciously—throughout the land. Ever since the Hanoverian succession this holy work had been little attended to, and time it was it should be. I am afraid there is truth in these lines, quoted by Mr. Cox in his 'Oxford Recollections' from Pugin's 'Contrasts':—

> Some raise a front up to the church,
> Like old Westminster Abbey,
> And thus they think the Lord to cheat
> And build the back part shabby.

However, these words, somewhat profane, could not be applied to St. Mary's in the old town now, what was begun by dear old Rowlands being so well carried out by the present vicar, the grandson of Bishop Butler.

And I thought how painful it was at times to mark the effects of change. For instance, a stone showing when it was part of the old steeple of the church of Hanwood had been used to hold water for hens and chickens—probably since 1711—and then, every old Shrewsbury boy saw, all the years he was at school there, St. Nicholas' Chapel, opposite the playground, some time within the baily of the castle, turned into two stables and a coach-house. Surely were the stones gifted with a voice they might say, with Philolaches in the play:—

> Cor dolet, quum scio, nunc ut sum, atque ut fui.

How vastly clever is the whole of that passage in 'Hamlet' which begins thus: 'To what base uses may we return, Horatio. Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till we find it stopping a bunghole?'

And I turned into lines a sentence or two I was reading:—

> And thus, behold! how native forms are turned
> To uses not their own. As you may see
> In what was late New Zealand graceful tree-ferns—
> Arrayed in lines of rugged corduroy—
> Become the roads of earnest gold-seekers,
> And mossy creepers and all trees of beauty
> O'erwhelmed as in an avalanche of 'mallee'

To fill the hands of avarice and greed,
And sometimes those of honest industry.

My Talking Friend informed me that there was a good deal of fever about after harvest this year. On consulting the documents for the time I find that the access of typhus fever was very severe in Ireland, and that it had been conveyed by the Irish to Liverpool. Thence it spread, easily enough, to Chester, and we had it in the village, close by the brook, at old John Jones's above mentioned. As far as I could make out it spread, more or less, all through the valley of the Rea, and Pontesbury, Minsterley, and Westbury knew it too well. It is on these occasions that the way in which the poor help each other is best known.

Faith's meanest deed more favour bears,
Where hearts and wills are weighed,
Than brightest transports, choicest prayers,
Which bloom their hour and fade.

On November 6 the whole nation sustained a heavy loss in the death of the Princess Charlotte—perhaps it could hardly have sustained a greater. 'The very ripple on the shallows of the Rea,' said my Talking Friend, 'was one of mourning.' The following extract from Wilberforce's 'Diary' deserves transcription :—

'Heard for certain, what before reported, that Princess Charlotte died about five hours after the birth of a very fine boy—stillborn. She bore her long sufferings admirably. About ten days before she had remarked : "Certainly, I am the happiest woman in the world ; I have not a wish ungratified. Surely, this is too much to last." The loss most deeply felt : her life had been truly exemplary—charitable, unostentatious kindness to all the poor around Claremont.' 'I must say,' is the postscript of a letter sent this day to Mr. Babington, 'alas ! for Claremont ; yet surely this is an event which, reasoning on Scripture principles, we may easily comprehend, both in the probable meaning of personal mercy and national, as well as domestic, punishment.'

There is something also very quietly touching in Lord Eldon's 'Anecdote Book.' As it may be remembered, he brought her back after her escape from Warwick House ; and

yet, assured of his integrity of heart and purpose, she greatly took to him. And so he tells how, when he came up from Encombe to Claremont, to be present at her confinement, according to legal and court requirement, she ordered him the best room, while some of the other lords had to sleep on the carpet.

In writing to Walter Savage Landor, in a letter before referred to, Southey says: 'There was a much deeper and more general grief than could have been expected, or would easily be believed. Two or three persons have told me that in most houses which they entered in London the women were in tears. The nation's darling was buried on the 19th in the Royal Vault, Windsor. Southey's Funeral Song was no conventional tribute of the laureate:—

In its summer pride arrayed,
Low our tree of hope is laid!
Low it lies . . . in evil hour
Death hath levelled root and flower.
Windsor, in thy sacred shade
(This the end of pomp and power!)
Have the rites of death been paid:
Windsor, in thy sacred shade
Is the Flower of Brunswick laid!
. . . . .
One who reverently for thee
Raised the strain of bridal verse,
Flower of Brunswick, mournfully
Lays a garland on thy hearse.

Once during this year the good old King 'was visited'—I use the words of Mr. Jesse—'with a few rays of reason, which, however, proved as transitory as on former similar mournful occasions. It was probably at this time, when his sense of hearing is said to have been temporarily improved, that, his ear happening to catch the sound of the passing-bell of Windsor Church, he inquired for whom it was tolling. The deceased, he was given to understand, was a person whom he had known, and for whose character he entertained a respect—the wife of one of his neighbours, a Windsor tradesman. 'She was a good woman,' he said; 'she brought up her family in the fear of God. She has gone to heaven, and I hope I shall soon follow her.' With the departure of

these last deceitful gleams of returning reason the King's mind appears to have become an unimpressible blank. Well and pathetically might he have repeated the grand and mournful lines of Milton, which I give in full :—

> Thus with the year
> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;
> But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
> Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair,
> Presented with a universal blank
> Of Nature's works to me expunged and rased,
> And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
> So much the rather thou, celestial light,
> Shine inward, and the mind, through all her powers,
> Irradiate ; there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight.

On December 18 came on the well-known trial of William Hone, which was carried on through the 19th and 20th, ending in his acquittal. As those are living who remember it well, he defended himself, and with no common ability. There can be no doubt of the mischievous tendency of his publications at this time; the satisfaction is that in after-years he came to a better mind, and Southey, who in 1820 wrote to his friend C. Wynn, saying that such things as the 'House that Jack built' ought to have been prosecuted immediately, was enabled to express himself thus pleasantly to Rickman in 1829: 'Remember me most kindly to Lamb, and tell him that the "Every Day and Table Books" have given me a great liking for his friend Hone, whom I would shake hands with heartily if he came in my way.' In after-years Southey recommended them to the 'Last of the Old Squires,' for his amusement in his latter days, and he was greatly pleased with them.

I think it was in this winter that I saw several tench, half frozen and alive, in the shallow pond under the withy trees in the Sibberscott bank field, which you enter over the little

brook that runs down to Shorthill ; and the Shrewsbury boy remembers Ovid's lines :—

> Vidimus in glacie pisces hærere ligatos,
> Et pars ex illis tum quoque viva fuit.

One evening about this time I watched a water-ousel in the Rea running under the water, and can thus corroborate the remark of Charles St. John in his 'Natural History and Sport' : 'The water-ousel manages to run on the ground at the bottom of the water in search of its food.'

I also watched the immovable stateliness of a heron in a shallow pool adjoining our great pool. He was watching for his prey with one leg up, and I was hid in the bushes and close enough to watch him, but did not see him catch a fish, as something disturbed him. Dick Hiley said that it was the oil of the leg that attracted the fish to him. So in Sweden, as Mr. Lloyd tells us in his 'Scandinavian Adventures,' the country people think 'the legs have a peculiar odour whereby the fish are attracted to the spot.' He himself was of opinion that the droppings were the attraction; and he tells a curious story of a tame one 'who' (like our old Trap) 'had the greatest possible antipathy to beggars and other ill-clad people, and used every means in his power to prevent them from coming near to the house. He was afraid of chimney-sweepers,' &c. He also disliked the colour of black in general, as much as turkeys dislike red. I wonder what is the origin of the Greek word 'crocodile'—the Egyptian *χάμψα*? Was it from the saffron colour of some of the lizard tribe beneath the belly—looking poisonous and inspiring fear?

Having been from boyhood a great lover of Walter Scott, I venture to insert this extract from 'Lockhart's Life,' so falling in with the time :—

'It is at least a curious coincidence in literary history that, as Cervantes, driven from the stage of Madrid by the success of Lope de Vega, threw himself into prose romance, and produced, at the moment when the world considered him as silenced for ever, the "Don Quixote" which has outlived Lope's two thousand dramas, so Scott, abandoning verse to Byron, should have rebounded from his fall'—i.e. in 'Harold

the Dauntless'—'by the only prose romance which seem to be classed with the masterpieces of Spanish genius by the general judgment of Europe.'

'Rob Roy,' which he engaged on unwillingly, was published on December 31 this year, and Scott sent these lines to James Ballantyne:—

With great joy
I send you Roy.
'Twas a tough job,
But we've done with Rob.

How often have I sat by the weir at Meole and on the banks of the Rea and read Scott's poems and his novels with delight; and I said, not knowing who wrote the lines, but thinking them apposite ones:—

The river runneth silently,
We cannot tell what it saith;
It keepeth its secrets down below,
And so doth Death.

Since then I have had other things to read, and have had many sorrows and troubles in my ministrations—the result, no doubt, of my own shortcomings and inefficiency—and I would, through grace given, I were better than I am in every way; but, as Bishop Wilson, of Calcutta, said under much cause for trouble and distress, so say I: 'I have found all through my ministry that things soon get right if I can but keep myself calm and wait for God. They only become impossible when obstinacy, pride, by-ends, worldliness, self, and departures in heart from Christ lie at the bottom of the wound and fester there. Who ever reached the crown of glory without bearing the cross which leads to it? Not one.'

CHAPTER LV.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF GEORGE III.

We are but farmers of ourselves, yet may
If we can stock ourselves and thrive, uplay
Much, much, good treasure 'gainst the great rent-day.
DONNE, *Poems: Letter to R. Woodward.*

My memory is a chaos of aughts and ends, and fit for nobody's use but my own.—WALPOLE, *To the Countess of Ossory*, vol. vi. 470.

For such, alas! we are all, in such a mould are we cast, that with the too much love we bear to ourselves, being first our own flatterers, we are easily hooked with other's flattery, we are easily persuaded of others' love.—SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, *Arcadia*, lib. iii. p. 367, folio 1633.

The times are very interesting now, while things are yet in agitation; and yet they will appear most inconsiderable hereafter.—WALPOLE, *Letters*, vol. v. 53.

On God's goode Booke then let us looke
For that which never faileth;
Without which Booke, by hooke or crooke,
No worldly witt prevaileth.
PHILOBIBLON SOCIETY:
Ancient Ballads and Broadsides, p. 263.

THE winter of 1818, my Talking Friend told me, was wonderfully mild, and he did not recollect to have heard the whistle of the wild goose's wings once passing and repassing between Marton Pool and his other haunts, nor were there any flights of wild ducks. There were plenty of snipes, as usual, but very few woodcocks. And I called to mind a curious entry in Riley's 'Memorials of London,' under 4 Henry V., A.D. 1416, Friday, November 13: 'The wife of Hildy the poulterer and the wife of John Mede was committed to prison for that, against the proclamation of the Mayor, the wife of Hildy sold 4 *wodecockes* for 20 pence, and the wife of John Mede refused to take 12 pence for 2 partriges.' It is added in a note that 'on November 16 following William Emery was

committed to prison for selling 2 woodcocks and 2 plovers for 17 pence against the proclamation.' After all, however, though this seems cheap to us, it is not so cheap when we look to the value of money then and now.

As to the winter my time-honoured old chronicler was right, for Southey wrote to Charles Wynn on January 1, saying: 'We are enjoying a beautiful winter here. No snow has yet fallen in the valley, and it lies on the falls not raggedly, but in an even line, so that Skiddaw and Grisdale bear no distant resemblance to the Swiss mountains, and imbibe tints at morning and evening which may vie with anything that ever was seen upon Mont Blanc or Jungfrau.'

On January 1 this year the Prince Regent wrote to Lord Eldon on the matter of the Princess of Wales, who had not been received at the Court of Vienna, as her behaviour on the Continent had given rise to unpleasant remarks. The result of the deliberations on this letter was the well-known Milan Commission; a very painful subject from first to last, and with no smell or taste of sweetness in it whatever—

Whereof a little,
More than a little is by much too much.

It was painful that all these things were now a subject of common conversation, and royal morality was discussed on the ale-bench.

It was at this time that Lord Chancellor Eldon's resignation was reported in the newspapers, on which he wrote to Sir William Scott, suggesting how glad he should be to resign if he could, adding those memorable words, 'I am likewise strongly impressed with a persuasion that, at my time of life, I should be thinking much oftener and more seriously of another world and its concerns than it is possible for me to address my thoughts to in possession of the most laborious office in the kingdom.' But, as he lived many years longer, it may serve to quote the line of Martial—

Non licet hic vitæ de brevitate queri.

Although the Regent was not a popular man—could not have been because of his habits—yet the English people are

at heart a loyal people, and when, on January 27, his speech, passed by commission, in which he alluded to his affliction and the nation's loss by the death of the Princess Charlotte, the nation felt for him at large; and had he 'taken up in time,' as the people express themselves, he had that presence about him which would have gone far to redeem him in their eyes. But it was not to be so. And yet the Prince was something of a scholar, and gave name to the 'Regent's Classics,' of which I have many by me still, which I purchased and read in my boyhood, and he knew and talked Shakespeare. Oh! that he had laid to heart the lines—

> There is a tide in the affairs of man,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
> On such a full sea are we now afloat;
> And we must take the current as it serves,
> Or lose our ventures.

Another point to which the speech made special allusion was to the deficiency of 'places of worship belonging to the Established Church, when compared with the increased and the increasing population'—a matter which I referred to in the preceding chapter, and which I will follow up now, though a little out of place. The question was brought forward on March 16, but it was passed in the month of May, and, as we must acknowledge, was a step in advance, for since the Hanoverian succession scarcely less could have been done for churches in a heathen country than was done in this which professed and called itself a Christian land, and, perhaps, was boastful. And yet all the while the Church as the Church—not the Establishment—was full as ever of righteous aspirations and of all that was holy, just, and good—

> Like circles widening round
> Upon a clear blue river,
> Orb after orb the wondrous sound
> Is echoed on for ever:
> Glory to God on high, on earth be peace,
> And love towards men of love—salvation and release.

I may venture to add here that the germ of the Ecclesiastical Commission will be found in the 'Act of the 37th of

George III., in which the emoluments of two prebends of Lichfield were sequestered for the purpose of repairing the cathedral.' It was referred to by Lord Holland in objecting to a grant of public money; and although the Archbishop of Canterbury said, in reply, 'that the measure to which the noble lord had referred was resorted to for the advantage of the individual church from which the sequestration of the prebends had been made, which was a very different case from that which had in view the supplying the general deficiency of churches by building new ones,' still there was, as I said, the germ of the Commission. It may also be called to mind, on this matter, that the goods and property of the ancient bishoprics of Osnaburgh and Hildesheim in Hanover became the property of the State, according to the principles of public Germanic right. The Prince Regent's decision is under date of July 28 this year.

On February 2 died Dr. Thomas Cogan, a name very familiar to me in my childhood, as his 'Treatise on the Passions' and some other of his works were on the shelves of the old homestead. He was educated by Dr. Aikin as a Dissenting minister, but changed his profession, and took the degree of M.D. at Leyden. No turncoat was he, but one

> To lend an ear to Plato, when he says
> That men, like soldiers, may not quit the post
> Allotted by the gods.

About this time—it was on February 4—the Scotch were satisfied as to the safety of their regalia, so long hidden from their eyes, and to which the old rhyme pointed, as quoted by Sir Walter Scott :—

> On Tintoch tap there is a mist,
> And in the mist there is a kist.

All this was reported in the valley of the Rea by a favourite ward of 'The Last of the Old Squires,' now an Edinburgh student; but the reader had better take the account from a letter of Sir Walter's to J. Wilson Croker, of the Admiralty, in his 'Life' by Lockhart. It is prefaced by these words: 'I have the pleasure to inform you the regalia of Scotland were this day found in perfect preservation. The sword of State and

sceptre showed marks of hard usage at some former period, but in all respects agree with the description in Thomson's work.' It may be added that the chest had been shut since March 7, 1707, and many thought the regalia had been carried up to London. The collected dust of years in the room and on the chest—six inches thick it was said—tended to disprove the report. The feeling to return them was as natural as that expressed in Moore's 'Irish Melodies':—

> So loath we part from all we love,
> From all the links that bind us;
> So turn our hearts, where'er we rove
> To those we've left behind us.

On February 5 died Charles XIII. of Sweden, and was succeeded by Charles John, so long known by the name of Bernadotte. I have before referred to his adoption by the late king under the year 1810, and have elsewhere stated how I saw him at Christiania in 1832, every inch a king:—

> On his grey temples were the marks of age
> As one whom years, one thought, should render wise.

His old companion in arms, the Duke of Wellington, was shot at in Paris on the night of the 10th or 11th of this month as he was returning in his carriage to his hotel, by a man named Cantillon.

On a cold night towards the end of February this year my Talking Friend told me that a poor man was picked up on the roadside, 'clemmed and hunger-bitten.' He was taken into the Upper House, where there lived in those days the most benevolent of men—was looked after and recovered. It was never known who he was, but most probably he was some wanderer after the wars, living upon the road and upon his means; and my time-honoured chronicler added: 'There were many such foreigners in those days.' In 'Domesday' they would have been called 'Francigenæ,' who gave name to the suburb of Frankwell in Shrewsbury. As early as 1278 the old term for persons not resident in the City of London was 'forinseci.' Oddly enough, looking to the Rea side, 'Reginald atte Watre' is mentioned as a foreign butcher in 1320; and other foreign folks selling their hay 'in dozens of smale

boteles'—in 1327—more recent bottles, as in Howell's 'English Proverbs':—

> A thousand pounds and a bottle of hay
> Is all one thing at Doomsday.

The other old word, 'clemmed,' is in common use in Shropshire to this day. Ben Jonson has it in 'Every Man out of his Humour,' where it is said, 'Hard is the choice when the valiant must eat their armour or *clem*.' Shakespeare, in 'Hamlet,' uses the word 'cling,' which is clearly explained by the words of Marillat in Beaumont and Fletcher:—

> My belly
> Is grown together like an empty satchel.

Gardeners still call bad apricots, peaches, and nectarines 'cling-stones.' Ray's account in his 'North Country Words' is not elegant, but it is to the point: '*Clem'd*, or *clam'd*, starved, because by famine the guts and bowels are as it were clammed or stuck together. Sometimes it signifies thirsty; and we know in thirst the mouth is often very clammy.' I suppose we may refer it to the Anglo-Saxon *clæmian* (Bosworth, iii. 5), which driven to its root means 'to stick together like mud,' or close as the shell of the clam. I was just leaving school at Wolverhampton at this time for Shrewsbury, and in Staffordshire the colliers constantly used the term, 'welly clammed,' that is, almost starved.

Early in March my Talking Friend informed me that they had very wild weather throughout the valley, and that the roar of the wind from Habberley Hole was like peals of thunder. Rough as it was here, it was still more so in the Channel, and the damage done was immense. Besides wrecks, no less than twenty sail were dismantled in the Downs. At Portsmouth the gale commenced about five o'clock on the morning of the 5th, and the tide rose five feet higher than ordinary spring tides, maintaining its flood three hours after it should have ebbed. The flood all round was excessive, and attended not only with great damage, but a serious loss of life. The force of the gale was not felt so severely on the east coast; but the Yarmouth boatmen had their warning and repeated this old saw:—

Water dogs and mare's tails
Make lofty ships have low sails.

On April 14 Sir Samuel Romilly, still engaged on acts of benevolence, brought in his Bill on the repeal of an Act of King William III., in which Mr. Wilberforce entirely agreed, and said 'he thought that if himself, or any other member, had anything with which to reproach themselves, it was their not having exerted themselves in endeavouring to render the penal code of this country less bloody than it was at present.' For many years we rivalled Draco's code, of which Demades and Herodicus said it was not the work of a man but of a dragon—δράκων—for our laws, too, were written, not in ink, but in blood.

Whose memory, like pale Death's stony mace,
Beats falling senses from the troubled soul.

It was an odd contrast, but I could not help contrasting the murmur of the brook which reached my Talking Friend so softly with the harshness of our own and Draco's laws. As Roderigo says to Pedro in the 'Pilgrim'—

How sweet these solitary places are! how wantonly
The wind blows through the leaves, and courts and plays with 'em!
Will you sit down and sleep? the heat invites you.
Hark, how yon purling stream dances and murmurs!
The birds sing softly too. Pray, take some rest, sir.

In truth the water of the Rea, drunk from off one of its gravelly shallows on a warm April day after a shower, the subtle scent of the mayflower, just opening and spending itself hard by, is more delicious than the Nile water out of a wide-mouthed porous jar, without the intervention of a glass—a luxury of which Lady Duff Gordon speaks in her letters from Egypt.

On April 22 Mr. Wilberforce introduced his motion relative to the treatment of slaves in the colonies. As before stated, in all these benevolent motions he had the assistance (how soon to be lost!) and help of Sir Samuel Romilly, that large-hearted and most excellent man. It was later on—on May 30—that he rose to make his motion relative to the treatment of the slaves in the island of Nevis, which he followed up on June 3, calling for a copy of depositions made

before the coroner of that island on the body of a negro called Congo Jack. It was at this time that the word 'emancipation' occurs amongst his secret counsels. 'Yet as another instance of the practical and cautious character of all his efforts he thought not in emancipation of depriving the owners of West Indian properties of their present right to the labour of their slaves, but only of granting to the slave such civil rights as should bring him under the protection of just and equal laws, and make him a member of the commonwealth instead of the chattel of an absent master.'

The merry month of May came in with heavy rains, and there was a great flood in the Rea. When the rains ceased there was a constant drought throughout the kingdom till the month of August; and the people said 'it was hot enough for Saint Britan himself,' alluding to the fable of his head sweating after having been taken from the fire. His history may be seen in Butler's 'Lives of the Saints,' under June 1. His body was first buried at the royal abbey of Repton—the Roman *Repandunum*, and Saxon *Repandum*, the capital of Mercia. Though afterwards translated to Evesham, the church of Repton still bears his name. That old Shropshire people should mention his name was natural, as they thought that Wistanstowe, in the union of Church Stretton, some nine miles from Ludlow, still referred to it. A full account of the parish may be seen in Eyton.

Immediately after these rains were over and the floods had subsided, quantities of young eels were found throughout the valley of the Rea with their heads up the stream. The same occurred in the Severn. As is well known, at the fall of the leaves, and after the first October flood, the old eels have their heads downwards, as if going to sea. For many years the 'Last of the Old Squires' took great interest in the natural history of the eel, and was once inclined to think they were viviparous, but afterwards changed his opinion. The eel-pout, or blenny, is known to be so.

What quantities of eels have I taken out of this beloved stream! how is each spot known to me in my old age, when I live by the river's side, but on the margin of the sea—so grand, so beautiful—

That green and restless plain
Unharvested of any.

And yet, methinks, we should hardly say so, for there is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. Bishop Wilson, of Man, would have said so with reserve as he looked to the Manx herring-boats and prayed for their success.

And the hot June was upon us, summer in its full force. As Southey wrote to Wilberforce, 'a real, honest, old-fashioned summer, such as summers were forty years ago, when I used to gather grapes from my grandmother's chamber window.' A longer continuance of fine weather was never known in the Lake Country, where the midsummer rains are usually heavy, as the mountains catch every cloud that crosses the Atlantic after the sun has entered the summer tropic, adding so greatly to the beauty of the mountains.

June drew unto his car; the hot bright rays
Now got from men as much of blame as praise,
As rainless still they passed, without a cloud,
And growing grey at last, the barley bowed
Before the south-east wind.

The little stream of the Rea was never known to be so low, and the dace, the chub, and the roach seemed to pant for breath, whilst the trout revelled on the shallows or darted forth from the weeds to catch at the flies. As for the carp and the tench in the ponds and stews, they 'blobbed' from morning till night; as for the nights they were fine as in the Mauritius, when undisturbed by hurricane, such as occurred there on March 1 this year. Milton must have had such nights in view when he wrote these sweet lines on—

Fairy elves,
Whose midnight revels by a forest side
Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while overhead the moon
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course, they on their mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund music charm his ear.

We, who are old boys now, were young boys then, and could hardly be kept out of the water. Perhaps I hardly remember the time when I could not swim, and was greatly amused, a year or so later, in listening to Sam Barlow—

'Death or glory Sam'—who attended the Shrewsbury boys when they went to bathe in the Severn, only letting good swimmers breast the Barge Gutter, whilst he carried with him bladders and corks for beginners, though he did not approve of them, thinking that boys learnt best to swim 'without corks.' If Livy may be credited the cork jacket is no invention of modern times. 'Ad eam rem Pontius Cominius, impiger juvenis, operam pollicitus, incubans cortici, secundo Tiberi ad urbem defertur.' Quite a Rob Roy's exploit! Every Shrewsbury boy remembers the lines of Horace:—

Simulac duraverit ætas
Membra animumque tuum, nabis sine cortice.

As far as I know the newest invention is 'human fins, for swimming.' The advertisement has recently appeared in the 'Times':—

HUMAN FINS, for Swimming, 12s. the Set; BARNETT, patentee, Paris (complete specification). With these ready adopted fins the swimmer can with ease and rapidity perform long distances with security against cramps. Sold by HEMARDINQUER, agent, 5, Falcon-street, City; and all indiarubber warehousemen, &c.—*April* 1869.

And July came in as hot as June. On the 24th the thermometer registered 93° in some places, and the mean temperature at Greenwich was 79°. It is said there had no such a hot summer been known throughout Europe for forty years. In the west of England, from the 19th to the 21st, there were violent thunderstorms, but they did not break up the weather.

At this time the shallows of the Severn were full of samlets, or, as Smollett calls them in his 'Ode to Leven Water,' 'the mottled par.' In our boyhood we always considered them the fry of the salmon, notwithstanding all disputes upon the point, and caught them below the Castle and Laura's Tower. The matter is now quite set at rest. Some old Shrewsbury boy may like to read the conclusions following from James G. Bertram's 'Harvest of the Sea.'

'I have personally watched the egg from the date of its contact with the milt, till the salmon has burst out of its fragile prison, and waddled away to the shady side of a friendly pebble, evidently anxious to hide its nakedness.

From November till March, through the storms and the floods of winter, the ova lie hid among the gravel, slowly but surely quickening into life,' &c. 'The experiments conducted at the Stormontfields ponds have conclusively settled the long-fought battle of the parr, and proven indisputably that the parr is the young of the salmon, that it becomes transformed into a smelt, grows into a grilse, and ultimately attains the honour of full-grown salmonhood.'

For several years in Shrewsbury there had been great discussions as to the acceleration of the mail traffic, and it was proposed to raise the road from the English bridge, on arches, or to lower the Wyle Cop. Connected with this subject it may be mentioned that John Palmer, Esq., of Bath, Comptroller of the Post Office, died on August 14. He it was that originated the mail coach system, and may be considered the first great reformer of the Post Office. The Government made him a tardy grant of 50,000*l*. He twice represented Bath in Parliament. I well recollect the late Rev. Charles Drury, of Pontesbury, telling me of his first letter, I think, to Mr. Pitt, adding many racy anecdotes of his first essays at Bath. At the same time, finding me busy with Mitford's 'History of Greece,' he told me much of him, and how he delighted, in his latter days, to carve wooden heads on holly-sticks, and present them to his friends.

On August 22 died Warren Hastings, at Daylesford House, Worcester, a name so often mentioned before in these pages.

Νῦν γὰρ λέβητος χαλκέου πλευρώματα,
σπόδον κέκευθεν ἀνδρὸς εὖ κεκλαυμένου.

The extract following is from the 'Annual Register,' and deserves to be transcribed; it is the last connecting link between him and Colonel Wood, of Hanwood House. 'He was kept on his trial during seven years; but whether the length of time wearied the House of Lords or they became convinced of his innocence, it so happened that, although many found him guilty under various charges, not one individual agreed in convicting him of the whole. The India Company liberally paid a great part of the expense of this tedious process, but his own fortune defrayed the rest. In

private life he is painted as one of the most amiable of human beings, with a nature "full of the milk of human kindness," and without a tincture of gall in his composition.

Connected with the name of Warren Hastings I may add, somewhat out of date, the death of two other remarkable men, well known in the valley. On September 21 Lord Ellenborough dates a letter from Worthing, in Sussex, wishing to resign his office of Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, which he had held for more than sixteen years. He was the constant defender of Warren Hastings and a most upright judge. He died on December 13, and his remains were deposited in the Charter House by the side of Sutton the founder—no mean man.

Pass on but a few days more—no more than a tenth wave of time as it were—and Sir Philip Francis, Hastings' bitter opponent, and the reputed author of 'Junius,' is no more. He died December 22, *ætat.* seventy-eight. Death, the great leveller, as in the case of Pitt and Fox, mowed down Warren Hastings and Sir Philip Francis in one year. As Shakespeare says:—

> Old time, the clock-setter, that bald sexton time.

Up to the end of November the year continued to be as fine as it was from the first, and the vegetation in the valley of the Rea was remarkable. The barley, so short in the harvest, absolutely threw up new bearded heads, though they did not ripen. Numbers of spring and summer flowers flowered again.

> The winter's sun is shining,
> The mist 's on Ponsert Hill,
> A russet tint is on the leaves,
> Yet flowers are blooming still.

The following remarkable extract from a letter of Southey's to Bedford, dated November 28, will show that the North was equally blessed with this fine weather. It should be recollected that he writes from Keswick:—

'This is a most remarkable season with us. On November 20 we had French beans at dinner, and now (on the 28th) there has not been the slightest snow on the mountain, nor the slightest appearance of frost in the valley. The late

flowers continue to blossom still, and the early shoots are pushing forward as if it was spring. The great scarlet poppy has two large buds ready to burst, and your favourite blue thistle has brought forth a flower. But, what is more extraordinary, the annual poppies, whose stalks, to all appearances dead and dry, were left in the ground merely till Mr. Lovell should give directions for clearing them away, have in many instances shot out fresh leaves of diminutive size, and produced blossoms correspondently small, not bigger than a pea. This is in our garden, which, as you know, has no advantage of shelter or situation; in happier spots the gardens have more the appearance of September than of winter.' And I could not but bethink me of Virgil's lines in the 'Georgics' as, once in a way, applicable to the climate of England, which foreigners love to abuse:—

Hic ver assiduum, atque alienis mensibus æstas.

After all, acclimatisation, as our Australian brothers speak, is a curious matter for thought, and a good deal depends upon the *regio cœlorum.*

Et quid quæque ferat regio, et quid quæque recuset.

And I call to mind a curious remark of Humboldt's, who says that 'white men born in the torrid zone walk barefoot with impunity in the same apartment where a European recently landed is exposed to the attacks of the *Pulex penetrans.* This insect, the too well-known chigoe, must therefore be able to distinguish what the most delicate chemical analysis fails to distinguish, namely, the difference between the blood and tissues of a European and those of a white man born in the country.' This marvellous naturalist somewhere else tells us that an old parrot retained the language of an extinct Indian tribe, being the last who spoke a few words.

On June 18, 1819, Lord Eldon presented a Bill, which passed as the 59 George III. c. 46, for abolishing appeals of felony and wager of battle, and made an entertaining speech for the curious in legal antiquities. I have not the speech at hand, but many curious particulars on the subject too long to insert here, beginning with Bracton, 'De Legibus' (my dear old

copy) and ranging through very old Northern reading. The scholars versed in Scandinavian lore should look to the notes of J. J. Stephanius on those words of Saxo Grammaticus, *Antiqua lingua Danica, spatium, in quo pugiles dimicabant, dicebatur Holmus*, &c. which will call to an old Shrewsbury antiquarian what was said of 'The Isle' and 'Fitz,' which was the last instance of the *gage de bataille* in this country, about which Du Cange will give information under *Duellum, Batallia*, and *Vadium*. On consulting Schilter, Kilian, Somner, Speakman, and all other more modern authorities, such as Cowel, Jacob, &c., I find that the one only borrows from the other.

A younger Shrewsbury boy than myself might like to read the following summary from Mr. H. Wedgwood's summary :—

'When a person under the Gothic laws proceeded against another at law, his first step was to give a pledge that his cause was just, and that he would abide the decision of the court. This requisition was satisfied when the appeal to law took the shape of a challenge to judicial combat, by the challenger flinging down his glove and the person challenged taking it up. The proceeding was signified by the term *vadiare duellum*, or wager of battle, and the same verb was extended to the analogous proceeding and on a solemn declaration of war, *vadiare bellum*, although there might here be nothing in the nature of a pledge. In modern times we use the word wage for the carrying on of war, and not merely the commencement, and the connection with the idea of pledges is wholly obsolete.'

I may add—as he was a native of Salvington, in this parish—that the learned Seldon's treatise 'De Duello, or Single Combat,' was published in the year 1809, and that Blackstone's remarks will be found in the third book of his learned 'Commentaries.' We all of us know the 'lists' and the 'duello' in Shakespeare, and, rather than return to his daughter, how Lear said, in the extremity of his distress and trouble even to madness—

> Rather, I abjure all roofs, and choose
> To *wage* against th' enmity o' th' air ;

To be a comrade with the wolf and owl—
Necessity's sharp pinch !

In these days, more than ever, people began to interlard very indifferent English with worse French, and one might have said, with Moth in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' 'they have been at a great feast of languages, and have stolen the scraps.' Walter Savage Landor said, somewhere, 'Some people think they write and speak finely, whereas they have forgotten their mother tongue.'

If any dislike the mixed contents of such a chapter as this, they have only to pass it by, and to go to Cause Castle, or the Old Castle in Shrewsbury, or the mound in the Cruckton Meadows, or to ask of the Rea, as it floats over the shallows, for tales of 'auld lang syne' and the further traditions of the valley,

THE HAPPY VALLEY!

or ever it was defiled by a manufactory or the greed of Mammon.

Omnia sunt Ejus, cujus nos esse fatemur ;
Nil proprium est nobis ; Ipse habet, Ipse dedit.

CHAPTER LVI.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF GEORGE III.

In the turmoils of our lives
Men are like politic states, or troubled seas,
Tossed up and down with several storms and tempests,
Change and variety of states and fortunes,
Till, labouring to the havens of our homes,
We struggle for the calm that crowns our ends.

FORD: *The Lover's Melancholy*, act iv. sc. iii.

And it did quite astonish him to see that so many men did dream that the way to the Vision of Peace lay through the field of strife and war; and that we must come to live together in endless love hereafter, by living in perpetual frays and broils in the world where we now are.—PATRICK: *Pilgrim*, c. iii. p. 11, 4to, 1670.

Is it possible we should not perceive a great loss of God's presence so long as we continue in places filled only with the sound of secular contentions and debatements, wherein the world and the devil find opportunity to instamp their image upon our souls, preventing all impression of matters heavenly?—THOMAS JACKSON: *Works*, vol. i. 924, ed. folio, 1673.

Sic rerum summa novatur
Semper, et inter se mortales mutua vivunt.
Augescunt aliæ gentes, aliæ minuuntur;
Inque brevi spatio mutantur sæcla animantum:
Et quasi cursores, vitaï lampada tradunt.

LUCRET. Lib. ii. 74-78.

IN a funeral sermon preached at the obsequies of the Lady Frances, Countess of Carbery, Jeremy Taylor thus applies the latter words:—

'There is no redemption from the grave. Men live in their course and by turns; their light burns awhile, and then it burns blue and faint, and men go to convene with spirits, and then they reach the taper to another; and as the hours of yesterday can never return again, so neither can the man whose hours they were, and who lived them over once; he

shall never come to live them again, and to live them better.' So did this sweetest of all sweet warblers in poetic prose apply the 'Torch Race of the Realm of Grecia.'

The year now begun was 1819—the year in which I am writing is 1869—a span of fifty years; and yet how well I remember all that passed at that time! Meanwhile, in looking to the empty homes of the haunts of my early days, and in counting the graves in the dear old churchyard at Hanwood, what searchings of heart come over me, and how do I lament opportunities past and gone, wishing I were a better man than I am! and so, through grace given, as it always is given—

Turning past evils to advantages.

On inquiring of my Talking Friend as to the winter, he told me that, on the whole, up to January it was a healthy one: enough snow to fill the springs, enough frost to mellow the ground, but not severe enough to crack his bark; for cold and heat both widen the cracks in old oak-trees. In young ones the brown and white openings on the rind are the test of growth. As for himself, he said—and the old branches quivered—he was

As some old tree
Hung round with moss in lands where vapour be:

Not in these words, of course, though, like trees in the fable, he could and did speak well and impassionately, but in words similar; for, living close to the banks of the Rea, and to the the little runlet which made its way there, his time-honoured trunk and branches would gather moss, which, as he quaintly observed, 'no rolling stone was ever known to do'—a proverb, by the way, which, in one shape or another, is common to most nations.

Early in January the Queen of Wurtemberg's death was announced in London. She was greatly regretted, and was a person of no inconsiderable endowments. She had visited England in 1814 and 1815, and was a favourite with everyone. My kind old friend Sir Henry W. W. Wynn used to mention her name with lively affection. She had been very kind to him in his earlier diplomatic days, and he

never forgot it. Some of her suite used to frequent the 'Old Hummumes' in Covent Garden—the last remnant of the Turkish Bath in London. Within a year or two they were introduced again, but our climate is not one that encourages them.

As mentioned in the preceding summary, Parliament opened on January 21 with a speech on the Prince Regent's behalf by the Lord Chancellor, the venerable Lord Eldon, ever true to his colours.

As usual, a part of the Christmas holidays was spent at the Marsh, and Cause Castle, by Westbury, so often mentioned in the earlier pages of this local history, was visited by the way. It was at the Marsh that I had the run of my uncle's library. It was upon this occasion that I took down Smith's 'Wealth of Nations,' which he prized; but as I could make nothing of it then—when a half-crown was great wealth to a schoolboy—I turned with renewed delight to his black-letter copy of Chaucer, and Spenser, and Ben Jonson, in which I read the translation of Horace's 'Ars Poetica' with the original. Having a good Shakespeare at the old homestead, I thought it lost time to look to him then. The very Shakespeare is before me now. The reader will see how I have studied it, and enjoyed

Ample interchange of sweet discourse.

Towards the end of February accounts from Bombay of deaths by that fearfully subtle malady, the cholera, reached England; a distant warning of what we might have to suffer hereafter. Between August 17 and 31 last there died 537 people. The name is old enough, and has been used 'since the time of Hippocrates, who admitted two species of the disease—one humid, the other dry—*χολέρα ὑγρὰ*, and *χολέρα ξηρά*. So writes Dr. Copland. Whatever the derivation, the results are fearful, and no remedy has yet been discovered.

Of the great and long discussions on finance which took place in March, and occupied the attention of Parliament, little was understood or thought of in the valley, where, amongst the old people, an old guinea, still treasured, was

a great possession. One word altered in the 'Pardonere's Tale,' and our poor man is before you :—

> Full oft in herte he rolleth up and down
> The beautee off this *guinea* new and bright.

It was at the beginning of the month that Sir James Mackintosh rose to address the House on the subject of the criminal laws—a subject on which Southey had written to C. Wynn in the month of January, saying that the subject could not long be evaded. 'The main part of the reform which I should propose,' said Sir James, 'would be to transfer to the statute-book the improvements which the wisdom of modern times has introduced into our practice of the law. One of my objects is to approximate them : to make good men the anxious supporters of the criminal law, and to restore that zealous attachment to the law in general which has distinguished the people of England among the nations of the world.' It was upon this occasion that he paid an affecting tribute to the memory of the late Sir Samuel Romilly, 'with whom he fully concurred in thinking that the punishment of death ought not to attach by law to any of those offences for which transportation is a sufficient punishment. In this case he joined his late friend in the conviction that the balance of advantage is decidedly against the continuance of the existing system.' Wilberforce jotted down in his diary : '*March* 2.—House. Mackintosh on capital punishments. He spoke admirably ; I very middling.' It is well known that the heart and soul of Southey and Wilberforce were in the matter, each being equally desirous of softening down our Draconic code before alluded to.

About this time an accident happened on the Pontesbury Road to the driver, if I recollect right, of the Snailbeach Lead waggon, which calls to my mind another antiquated law—that of deodand—which was not abolished till 1842 by statute 9 and 10 Vict. c. 62. After the inquest they said there was a 'deodand on the wheel'—which, at that time, I must confess I was not wise enough to understand. I knew full well the poor fellow could not live; for, though no bones were broken, he looked so livid, uttering one or two unintelligible words and moans.

It was in the middle of March that Cross and Pickering, the two millers on the Rea for Cruck Meole and Cruckton, reported the burning down of the water corn-mills at Chester, stating that the loss was estimated at 30,000*l.* They had heard it at market, and knew it to be true because the miller of the King's Mills, on the Chester Road, had told them all about it. Mr. Cross's voice was, perhaps, hoarser than usual, Pickering's more loud, like Pilatus'. Neither of them, however, had sustained any loss. Chester Billy, the coachman of well-known repute in Shrewsbury, always used to point out to us the 'Royal Arms' as we passed the Royal Mills. They were on the front wall. Who recollects him now, and how he drove the coach backwards and forwards 120 miles a day for years? Or how he told his old wife in my hearing—she kept a 'tuck shop'—that he was tired of a beefsteak and oyster-sauce, and she must make a change? Or the sly way in which he pointed out the thorn-bush just over Overton Bridge into which a brother Jehu had been thrown when the coach overturned—of course he did not overturn it—and the difficulty the passengers had to rescue him? A heavy man upon the box was Chester Billy, but he was a man of droll humour. I am afraid, like most of his class in those days, he died poor. He drove well, and the horses knew his pleasant voice. None could call his—

The graceless action of a heavy hand.

I must not omit to mention here that this spring great alarm was felt, in the metropolis especially, by alarming accounts of the plague from the coast of Africa, where it was committing great ravages. 'In Tetuan there had died, between March 17 and 21, 357 persons; in Fez the daily amount of deaths exceeded 150; and in Mequinez they amounted to between thirty and fifty.' What an awful thing would the plague be now if it were to visit London with its three million souls! We may well take up the words of the litany and pray to be delivered from 'plague and pestilence'! Under some frightful visitation—less than our deserts—I can imagine the alarm and despair of the irreligious multitude to be as great as ever it was under the black death or the sweating sickness.

The Duke and Duchess of Kent arrived at Dover on April 23 this year, and we who are now alive know well that on May 24 her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent was safely delivered, at Kensington Palace, of a princess at a quarter past four o'clock—which princess is now our gracious Queen Victoria. The 'Annual Register' states the time, which the 'maître d'hôtel' could not do exactly, owing to the deluge of good cheer. As the man said in the play, 'He was sure it was when the moon was in conjunction, and all the other planets drank at a morris-dance. A bit of an astrologer, he augured well of his young mistress's fortunes. Perhaps it was as Volpone says, and as others have said before him:—

Good wits are greatest in extremities.

There can be no doubt whatever that 'fairy mythology,' which embraces almost every superstition, has a great hold still on the Welsh and on the Scotch, as well as the Irish, and Sir Walter Scott's words in the introduction to the sixth canto of 'Marmion' are graphically true:—

All nations have their omens drear,
Their legends wild of woe and fear.
To Cambria look—the peasant see,
Bethink him of Glendowerdy,
And shun 'the spirits' blasted tree.'
The Highlander, whose red claymore
The battle turned on Maida's shore,
Will, on a Friday morn, look pale
If ask'd to tell a fairy tale;
He fears the vengeful elfin king,
Who leaves that day his grassy ring:
Invisible to human ken,
He walks among the sons of men.

I am enabled to add to this digression some curious remarks from the Rev. G. F. Tozer's recently published work, 'The Highlands of Turkey,' &c. The chapter on the 'Classical Superstitions existing among the Modern Greeks' is full of curious information.

The following notices will be found there:—

The Nereids, whose name is still retained in the modern Greek word *νερό*, that is, water, are also known as 'the good

ladies' (καλαὶς κυράλες, καλαὶς ἀρχόντισσαις), though this term is applied to them not in the same way as the northern fairies are called 'the good people,' from an idea that they are generally friendly to men, but as an euphemism; for, as we shall presently see, they are almost universally malevolent, and, if so, to be propitiated.

On which I remark, for the benefit of old Shrewsbury boys, that Virgil represented the nymphs in general as good-natured :—

Et quo, sed faciles Nymphæ risêre, sacello ;

and those of the groves as particularly so, in the well-known passage :—

Tu munera supplex
Tende, petens pacem, et faciles venerare Napæas.
Namque dabunt veniam votis, irasque remittent.

Nemesianus also in his 'Cynegeticon' gives them the same good character :—

Tecum Naiades faciles, viridique juventæ,
Pubentes Dryades, Nymphæque, unde amnibus humor.

And, to sum up all, Propertius says of Virgil, still singing his praise :—

Quamvis ille sua lapsus requiescat avena,
Laudatur faciles inter Hamadryadas.

No matter if he leave his bucolic reed and sing of trees in the 'Georgics,' his fame is still his own—all will give him the first place.

As is well known, the Hamadryads have had attached to them a measure of life equal to that of a tree.

In June this year became known the painful surrender in Greece—that of the old Christian town of Parga—which took place on April 10. It was afterwards much talked of and canvassed by old Shrewsbury boys, because the Rev. T. J. Hughes, the author of those interesting travels in Greece and Albania, was one of dear old Bishop Butler's pupils, and had resided there. The modern Greek ballad, quoted by Mr. Tozer in his 'Highlands of Turkey,' says :—

But 'twas for silver Christ was sold, and thou art sold for silver.

For, as Mr. Hughes puts it, Ali Pasha was not likely to

rest under a disappointment, and his gold proved in this instance, as in many others, all-powerful at Constantinople: Parga was demanded by the Porte as the price of her acquiescence in our occupation of the Ionian Isles, and a secret treaty consigned over to Mahometan despotism the last little spot of ancient Greece which had remained unpolluted by her infidel conquerors.

Nothing can be more affecting than the details of the evacuation of this brave old town—the last remnant of the Venetian Republic on the coast of Albania. For it, however, the reader must turn to the histories of the time. I will only add, in the words of the author above quoted: 'When the bands of Ali Pasha reached the walls, all was solitude and silence. The city, as it has been observed, received its infidel garrison, as Babylon or Palmyra salutes the Christian traveller, in the dust: nothing breathed, nothing moved. The houses were desolate, the nation was extinct, the bones of the dead were almost consumed to ashes, whilst the only sign that living creatures had been there was the smoke slowly ascending from the funeral piles.'

Parga lies thirty-six miles S.S.W. of Janina, and all that have visited it speak of the beauty of its situation. 'Most picturesque,' Mr. Tozer calls it. 'The coast at this point faces south, and a small natural harbour is formed by two or three rocky islands which lie in front of it. Upon a cliff at the western horn of this bay stood the old town, now marked by ruined houses and a Turkish citadel. Eastwards rises the smaller eminence of St. Athanasio. Outside the fortress stands the new town, extending down to the beach, with one white minaret, denoting it to be an Osmanli possession.'

Our recent surrender of the Ionian Islands was, I suppose, the Nemesis of Parga—at all events, a beginning of the end. How many there are, even yet, prepared to say, despite the Nemesis behind:—

> 'Tis safe idolatry to bow unto
> The rising sun.

Never was anything more beautiful than the valley of the

Rea this summer, and as Mr. Peters said to his old friend Mr. Bacon, a Fellow of Queen's, Oxford, mentioned before in these pages—

Hic mecum licet, hic, Juvate, quidquid
In buccam tibi venerit, loquaris.

In wandering through the 'Patches,' where the little stream, which in winter floods becomes great, is constantly wearing for itself a new course, so dividing the fields as to give them that name, any stranger would be taken with the variety of the wild flowers on its banks.

See the dewdrops how they kiss
Every little flower that is,
Hanging on their velvet heads
Like a rope of crystal beads.

The god of the river in this bewitching drama speaks of—

Two banks with osiers set
That only prosper in the wet,

And promises Amoret — what could he promise more prettily?—

That if thou wilt go with me,
Leaving mortal company,
In the cool streams shalt thou lie,
Free from harm as well as I:
I will give thee for thy food
No fish that riseth in the mud,
But trout and pike, that love to swim
Where the gravel from the brim
Through the pure streams may be seen.

One would think that John Fletcher had loitered on the banks of the Rea as Izaak Walton did by Brace Meole, when the sun was bright some summer's day, and had watched the fish which would not sport.

In my early days the druggists from Shrewsbury gathered samples in those fields, and crabs from the well-known crab-tree which made pure verjuice. But, as far as I remember, it was 'woad' which was the chief object of search, the *Isatis tinctoria* before alluded to, and, if so, the dyers probably had a hand in the matter, all of which may remind the reader of Clorin sorting herbs in the play above alluded to.

For the benefit of any old Shrewsbury boy, I quote the lines relative to the 'rhamnus,' or the 'white thorn,' an old superstition :—

> There rhamnus branches are
> Which, stuck in entries, or about the bar
> That holds the door, kill all enchantments, charms
> Were they Medea's.

Well taught by dear old Dr. Butler, he turns at once to the 'Fasti' of Ovid and reads :—

> Sic fatus, spinam, qua tristes pellere possit
> A foribus noxas (hæc erat alba) dedit.

A very different application is made by Jeremy Taylor in his 'History of the Life and Death of the Holy Jesus' : 'An angry, violent, and disturbed man is like the white bramble of Judæa, of which Josephus reports that it is set on fire by impetuous winds and consumes itself and burns the neighbour plants.'

If I recollect right, speaking of plants, the *Nepeta catasia* grew by the old walls of The Lynches, near Yockelton, no doubt, pointed out to me by J. Clavering Wood, Esq., of the Marsh, my uncle, and an excellent botanist. I recollect some old catch :—

> If you set it, the cats will eat it ;
> But if you sow it, the cats won't know it.

A very curious old house is The Lynches, the meaning of which I never have arrived at, though the flats and meadows below and the windings of the stream naturally call to mind the 'Links' of Scotland. I find the following in Eyton's 'Antiquities' : 'At the assizes of August 1226 Thomas de Linches and Emma, his wife, were found to have disseized Stephen FitzWarin and Alice de Fennimare of common pasture in Fennimare, pertaining to their tenement in that vill.' The old farm belongs now, I think, to the Onslow property. This is all I seem to know. '*Cæcus Bernardus non vivit omnia*,' or, as Dan Chaucer renders it in his 'Legende of Goode Women' :—

> Barnarde, the monke, he saugh nat al, pardé.

Not far from Newnham—between it and the Lea—lies Polmer's, or Pomer's, Pond, the great haunt of the lapwing, or peewit. These birds breed there in great numbers, and foreigners would have taken all their eggs—the well-known *œufs de vanneau*, corrupted from *Vanellus*. It was during this summer that I watched them first. Already not unskilled in natural history, and a reader of Shakespeare, I knew the line—

> Far from the nest the lapwing cries away—

in which the old proverb is alluded to, 'The lapwing cries tongue from heart,' or 'The lapwing cries most furthest from the nest,' alluded to likewise by Massinger in his old law :—

> He hath the lapwing's cunning, I'm afraid,
> That cries most when she's furthest from the nest.

The other peculiarity of the lapwing—that when it leaves the nest it has a bit of the shell sticking to its head—applied by Horatio to Osrick, is not so uncommon with waterfowl and ducklings as one may suppose. I have seen them more than once with a little shred of shell attached to their crowns, and, no doubt, others have done so likewise.

It was three or four summers after this that dear old John Price, when visiting at the old homestead, spent much time at Polmer's Pond watching them, and now and then killing one as a specimen. He is now one of the best naturalists of the day, and of all curious books 'Old Rico's Remains'—he still lives, God bless him!—is one of the most curious; so ripe a Latin and Greek scholar; so well versed in most modern languages and in philosophy; one to say—

> He deserves small trust
> Who is not privy counsellor to himself.

In the month of July—on the 7th—Mr. Wilberforce again pressed the further abolition of the slave trade. There was but one power now which had not condemned it as a mass of injustice and cruelty, and that was Portugal. The Address to the Prince Regent was agreed to at once, as it was in the House of Lords on the 9th. From first to last this good man never gave in. Had he or Clarkson listened to the Sir Politic

Would-bes of the day—'fellows of outside and mere bark,' as Ben Jonson translates Longinus—the victory had never been gained. For—

> All truths meet not
> With charitable care ; there is a descant
> That pleases not sometimes, though the best art
> Present it, if our sense be indisposed
> To patience and calm hearing.

Very heavy thunderstorms burst upon the valley of the Rea this month, and the rush of waters was so great in the little stream that the moorhens' nests, which are so constructed as to rise and fall as the brook rises and falls, were swept away. Only the old wild duck that had her nest in a pollard-willow in the Cruckton meadows was safe.

The thunderstorms above mentioned were very general throughout England, perhaps, the severest of all seen in Norfolk—about Dereham, Reepham, and Spurham—when much damage was done to grass and the crops generally. France was likewise severely visited, and in the department of the Lower Alps, the crops of olives, grapes, and corn were all but destroyed.

On July 13 Parliament closed with a speech from the Prince Regent himself, in concluding which he alluded specially to the disturbances in the manufacturing districts, and to the attempts of those who, 'under the pretence of reform, have really no other object but the subversion of our happy constitution.' True, very true ; but still the times were sadly out of joint, and it could not but be admitted that there was great distress throughout the length and breadth of the land, so that if any said :—

> Both young and old rebel,
> And all goes worse than I have power to tell,

still dwelling upon all the irregularities that met their eyes, upon—

> All the inconsiderate humours of the land—
> Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries,

it was, nevertheless, time to suggest deep thought and great wariness, and all good men bethought them how they might best stay coming evils. As our great dramatist said again, with intuitive wisdom :—

Modest doubt is called
The beacon of the wise, the test that searches
The bottoms of the worst.

Impressed with some such views as these it was that W. S. Landor said:—

But when lie down our charities
For human weal and human woes
Then is the time our eyes should close.

On August 10 of this year the first stone of the Menai Bridge was laid by the resident engineer, Mr. John Provis. The design was by Telford—so well known in Shrewsbury, where he was employed in his early days, as may be recollected in connection with the fall of St. Chad's Church, to be referred to again in the construction of this great work.

As connected with the old town an account in brief must be given in these pages. Not only was all the iron work done by Mr. Hazeldine, of Shrewsbury, the iron being drawn at Upton Forge, and finished and proved at his establishment close by, but numbers of men from the neighbourhood were employed in the works; and as it proceeded towards completion the whole valley of the Rea, from Cause Castle downwards to Colcham, was moved, and John Altree, of Hanwood, a Weyland Smith in his way, was perhaps the only man in the village who appreciated the value of malleable iron, and dwelt upon its extensive application as he ate his oysters at home and drank deep o' Saturday nights at the 'Cock.'

The following passages are taken pretty much from Telford's 'Autobiography,' edited by his friend Bickman, who took me to visit him in his latter days, rejoicing still to help rising men and to mend his own worsted stockings as a modern lady does worsted work—for pastime!

'The most formidable obstacle,' says this plain, simple man, 'in the whole of the line of communication between London and Dublin was the strait which separates the island of Anglesea from the county of Carnarvon. This isle of MONA, the anciently celebrated resort of the Druids, being wholly projected beyond the general line of coast into the Irish Channel (narrowed by it twenty miles) appears to have

been selected for the last retreat of these mysterious bardic legislators. In common with other straits which separate any island from the continent or from a larger island, this arm of sea exhibits peculiarities in its tide, which twice in every twelve hours rushes in different directions, and frequently with great velocity. The rise at ordinary spring-tides is about twenty-two feet, sometimes as much as thirty feet; and being in the vicinity of the Snowdon range of mountains it is liable to violent gusts of wind, from which liability, and from the ferry passage being frequently made in the night, this part of the journey was rendered a disagreeable object of anticipation, and was sometimes really dangerous.'

The first stone, as just remarked, was laid on August 10, and is in the middle of the lowest course of the sea-face of the Ynys-y-Mook Pier, where the breadth of the estuary at high water is 306 yards, at low water 160 yards. The total length of the bridge is 1,710 feet, or nearly one-third of a mile.

Some remarks of Telford connected with Shrewsbury, and otherwise valuable, must be inserted here. 'One of the most important improvements which I have been able to introduce into masonry consists in the preference of cross-walls to rubble, in the structure of a pier, or any other edifice requiring strength. Every stone and joist in such walls is open to inspection in the progress of the work, and even afterwards if necessary; but a solid filling of rubble conceals itself, and may be little better than a heap of rubbish confined by side walls. The example of the pillars of St. Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, when that edifice fell in the year 1788, was ever infixed on my memory. The pillars were built about the close of the reign of Richard II., A.D. 1399; and I am bound, from impartiality, to add that the piers of Westminster Bridge (no more than eighty years old) now exhibit an almost similar case of imperfect materials and workmanship.' As we all know, Telford's remarks proved but too true, and the bridge is now rebuilt. The scour of the river has been likewise too much for Blackfriars Bridge. It too is nearly rebuilt now, and will be opened this year (1869).

'On the Carnarvon side it was necessary to obtain a firm

rock foundation by sinking six feet beneath the level of low water. The height of these main piers, from high water to the roadway, is 100 feet; thence to their apex is fifty-three feet. The road platform is occupied by two parallel carriage ways, each twelve feet in breadth, and a footpath of four feet between them, thus admitting of four distinct lines of suspension chain, the distance between the points of suspension being 379 feet.'

In the year 1826, at midsummer, I visited this miscellaneous structure, and, with an order, proceeded to view the grapplings in the rocks, and methought that the Κράτος and Βία of the Prometheus Vinctus, which I had been recently reading, had been at work there:—

> ῥαιστῆρι θεῖνε, πασσάλευε πρὸς πέτραις·
> ἄρασσε μᾶλλον, σφίγγε, μηδαμῆ χάλα.

I dreamt of what I had seen all the night through, and I remember it as well as if it were to-day, so deep was the impression made. Speaking of the Anglesea side, Telford himself says: 'The mode of fixing the main chains in the rock, being an important operation, is worthy of inspection by every visitor of the bridge, who feels no dread at entering by a side drain (on the Anglesea side) into a cavern in the rock, containing gigantic ironwork and productive of feelings of superhuman agency.' And thus it stands, as Jean Ingelow says in her Story of Doom:—

> Rolling among the furrows of the unquiet,
> Unconsecrate, unfriendly, dreadful sea.

To the great satisfaction of the engineer himself, his faithful coadjutor, Mr. A. Provis, and Mr. Hazeldine, of Shrewsbury, whom I well remember, the bridge was opened on January 30, 1826, most successfully and without a single accident. In the evening all the workmen held a 'joyous festival,' and, as I know, the *cwrw du* flowed freely.

When I visited it later in the year I was remarkably struck with the Irishry of an Irishman. It was evidently his first visit, and when he reached the bridge on the Anglesea side, and witnessed the vibration—for it could be seen as well as felt—he got off the roof of the coach for fear of his dear

life, but walked on the mid-pathway by its side till it reached the Carnarvon end. He then mounted the roof again, entirely to his own satisfaction, regardless of the laughter of his fellow-travellers. I was examining the bridge, and was a witness to the whole affair.

Owing to the extraordinarily fine summer there were never seen so great a number of kingfishers on the Rea during the autumn months, darting like light from one shallow to another. As is well known, he is not a bird of elegant proportions, being shaped to dart into the water like an arrow, and to secure his prey; but all admit his contour to be beautiful. When Mr. Bickmore, alluding to the beautiful kingfishers of the Bandas, speaks of the sombre-coloured ones of his own country, he speaks as an American. Mr. Wallace tells us that he collected in those seas eight species, and one very beautiful new one, the *Halcyon fulgidus*. Another, the beautiful little violet and orange species (*Ceyx Alcyon*) 'darts rapidly along like a flame of fire,' and it is curious that it is usually found away from the water, among thickets, feeding on snails and insects like the great laughing jackass of Australia.

It is not forgotten by old people in the valley still that on October 22 of this year there was a great snowfall of five inches deep, which thawed the day following and was succeeded by a week's frost. My Talking Friend said it came too soon for him and hindered the ripening of his midsummer shoots, and had it not been for the high wind the weight of the snow must have broken many of his branches, as it did those of the ash and elm, and of other trees not so 'hearty' as himself.

The extract following from the 'Annual Register' shows that the snowfall must have been general:—'*October* 23.—Between one and two o'clock yesterday morning a great fall of snow commenced, accompanied by a violent hurricane. The wind blew from the north-west, and has done considerable damage in and about the metropolis. The roads at the entrance of London were in several parts impassable, particularly at Walthamstow, where a number of trees were torn up by the roots and lay across the highway, compelling travellers

to make a circuit of several miles. The snow had also accumulated near a foot deep, and the pathways in the fields were impassable for foot passengers.'

One great storm is not unusually succeeded by another, and on the 27th of this month Aberdeen, and the whole of the north-east coast, was visited by one of the most tremendous gales known for years. The damage amongst the shipping was very great, and many wrecks were attended with painful circumstances.

It was towards the latter end of this month that the trial of the editor and publisher of John Cam Hobhouse's 'Hundred Days' came on in Paris—a subject now pretty well forgotten. On December 14 Hobhouse was committed to Newgate for seditious language in a pamphlet called 'The Trifling Mistake,' in which are the words as quoted in the 'Times' for June 4, 1869. He was born June 27, 1786, and died June 3, 1869, *ætat.* eighty-three—better known of late years as Lord Broughton. Readers of any standing will remember his notes to Lord Byron's 'Childe Harold.'

But such trials as the one above alluded to only tended to fan the restless flame throughout the country, and many a red republican was delighted—

> More than if
> All treasure that's above the earth, with that
> That lies concealed in both the Indian mines,
> Were laid down at his feet.

Parliament met on November 23, with a speech from the Prince Regent in person, in which, after having alluded to the continuance of his Majesty's lamented indisposition, he turned at once to the disturbed state of public feeling, which was the reason that the House were assembled at this period of the year. It was in his speech on this occasion in the Upper House that Earl Grey condemned severely the approval of the conduct of the military at Manchester, and spoke strongly on the removal of Earl Fitz-William. Lord Sidmouth spoke in reply and defended the course taken by the military and the Government. Later on, on the 30th, he laid before the House the measures which the ministers of the Crown thought it necessary to propose

on the present state of the country. It was with reference to the same alarming state of things that Lord Lansdowne rose in the House, on December 1, to propose the appointment of a committee to inquire into the state of the manufacturing districts, which was opposed and not carried.

Meanwhile the military training of disaffected people was still going on, as was very well known in the valley from the connection of the Hanwood manufactory with Leeds and the Marshalls, and of course with Manchester. And I called to mind the words of an old play, 'The knaves do not know themselves, they are so exalted and altered. Preferment changes any man.' It was on December 2 that Lord Sidmouth's motion was brought forward—not, as he said, a Bill for disarming the people, but to hinder them from using arms against the King and the Constitution. Nine lords signed a 'protest.' Their names may be seen in the 'Annual Register.'

Looking to the present day (July 1869) it is something worth remembering that on December 14 this year Lord John Russell introduced his motion on Parliamentary reform, but withdrew it for the present at the suggestion of Lord Castlereagh—though a few days afterwards he brought in a Bill for the disfranchisement of Grampound and the transfer of its representation to some populous town. It may be added that Grampound had sent two members to Parliament from the time of Edward VI. till 1824. It is an old Cornish market town. Grampound, of course, did not wish to die so early a death of boroughs.

> How Nature trembles at the thought of death,
> Though it be pressed down with the thought of life!

On December 30 was passed, after much discussion, the new Paper Stamp Act. The stamp commenced in 1713, and was totally abolished in 1855, since which time it is for postal purposes only. Those who have lived in the valley of the Rea all their early years will call to mind many curious stories of the post and postage, some of which have been alluded to before.

But, after all, are three posts a day a pleasure or a bore?

Happily, at the close of the year, the loaf was cheaper, which is always a material consideration in disturbed times. In January wheat was 79*s.* 3*d.* per quarter; in December it had fallen to 65*s.* 10*d.* Barley was 63*s.* 11*d.*, and fell to 37*s.* 1*d.* Oats stood at 35*s.* 9*d.*, and fell to 25*s.* 2*d.*

The average of the year was:—

Wheat 73*s.* 2*d.*, barley 46*s.* 6*d.*, oats 29*s.* 3½*d.*

In looking back to this year I find an old sketch of the abbey pulpit at Shrewsbury, which has been alluded to before in these pages, and was probably the pulpit of the refectory. An account of it, with plate, may be seen in the history of Shrewsbury.

The last time I was in Shrewsbury—it was in 1868—to my great horror I saw this dead remnant of hoar antiquity standing by itself and naked as the old logician's definition of a man, '*Animal bipes implume.*' A contractor had bought the ground and levelled it for a railway station—that to Llanymynech, I think. I was told that it might be removed, but how or when? Nothing ever seemed to me so unseemly as the desecration of this old pulpit. I picture it to myself now, as I saw it on autumn days in my childhood, incarnardined with its Virginian creeper, still brightened by the setting sun. There it stands like the statue of Memnon in the desert, and as such the dent of the workman's hammer has not yet marred it. The sun—

> That pure immortal element that knows
> No gross, no inharmonious mixture foul—

cannot make it speak, as once it spoke, to the monks in the refectory.

Almost as I write this the old town has lost another remnant of bygone ages by the demolition of the old Chapel of St. Nicholas, which, as an old Shrewsbury boy, I looked on daily from the schools.

Looking at our ancient monuments passing away from the very midst of us, of how very few may we say indeed—

> Instructed by the antiquary times
> He must, he is, he cannot but be wise.

Methinks the apes themselves in that ancient fable never

did a more senseless thing, which, espying a glowworm, gathered sticks and blowed themselves breathless to burn them.

It was about this time that old oak furniture, as my Talking Friend said, was sought for throughout all the country, and carried off to Wardour Street, for the benefit of the London market. Formerly there was a good deal throughout the valley, but bit by bit it disappeared. So was it in the county of Sussex, and the whole weald was pillaged. A few remnants I myself saw some thirty years ago in the neighbourhood of Wisborough Green and Loxwood, but, no doubt, by this time all has been carried off.

Another matter, of a totally different sort, I can now call to mind as under discussion in those days, which was 'the Pope,' and 'the Popedom,' though for myself I knew much more about the old game of Pope Joan and the family board of curious shape and device. Probably the cause of discussion was the advancing years of Pius VII., who had held the seat since 1800. He was succeeded by Leo XII. in 1823.

Without entering upon the errors of the Romish Church, and admitting that there were plenty of bad and worldly popes—as there have been plenty of bad and worldly bishops in our own Church—the passage following, from Dr. Pusey's 'Eirenicon,' is well worth serious consideration, where we are reminded, by what is going on, of what the Earl of Kildare said in the days of Henry VIII.: 'I had never burned the church unless I had thought the bishop had been in it.'

A recent discussion in the 'Athenæum' brings to my mind the Marsh and our holidays once more. Amongst other things I read the 'Spectator,' which I was ever fond of, and once read it at Christ Church on the regular days, supposing each day to be the one on which it was published, and trying to identify myself with the time. My kind uncle told me that each letter in 'CLIO' was Addison's, and that his usual day was Saturday.

The discussion above alluded to refers to some lines inserted Saturday August 23, 1712; lines which I, no doubt, considered Addison's, but which, probably, are the property

of Andrew Marvel. I dare say I could repeat them then—I transcribe them now, so bringing the chapter and the year to a conclusion :—

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their Great Original proclaim ;
Th' unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The works of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth
Repeats the story of her birth ;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And speed the truth from pole to pole.

What, though in solemn silence, all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball ?
What though nor real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found ?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever saying, as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine !

CHAPTER LVII.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF GEORGE III.

Life so grand
Not by age to be defaced.
FORD: *The Broken Heart*, act iii. sc. iv.

Atque equidem, extremo ni jam sub fine laborum
Vela traham, et terris festinem advertere proram,
Forsitan et——.
VIRGIL: *Georg.* iv. 116.

I am a man,
And all those glories, empires heap'd upon me,
Confirmed by constant friends, and faithful guards,
Cannot defend me through a shaking fever,
Or bribe the uncorrupted hand of death,
To spare me one short minute.
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER:
The Prophetess, act iv. sc. v.

MY Talking Friend recalled to my recollection the great cold at the beginning of the year, when there was much snow, partial thaws, and then frost again—and still harder frosts yet. Several people were found frozen to death—one by the Leeds coach between Barnsley and Ferrybridge. The poor fellow was sitting upright in his cart, with the reins still dangling in his key-cold hand. On Dartmoor the snow lay deeper than it did in the severe winter six years ago. My patient chronicler said that it started the old bark on his sides, that the Pound Meadow lane was all but impassable, and that the little runlets at Shorthill and Sibberscott were quite choked up. The boathouse bank, close to Shrewsbury, was in a most dangerous state After many attempts to get it improved it remains the same till this day. Meanwhile, old Hafren flows close by, and ripples triumphantly.

Great rivers are the highways of the world.

Early in this year Southey proposed to Longmans & Co. to publish an edition of some one of his poems, with or without the notes, in a small cheap form—one of the first steps towards the cheaper literature we are now enjoying. 'I do not think,' are his words, 'it would lessen the sale of the current editions, but that sufficient purchasers would be found to give 3*s.* 6*d.* or 4*s.* who would never give 14*s.* I should like to try this experiment with "Thalaba," that being of all my poems the most likely to become popular. It would thus be placed within reach of a whole class of customers who never buy books till they are lowered in price to their means; but this class is numerous and always on the increase, and is plainly worth printing for, because so many books are printed for it.' I believe the cheap edition had a considerable sale.

On January 20 this year Cruck Meole and all the neighbourhood met with no common loss by the death of old Henry Warter, of the Upper House, as it was called, and within the precincts of which stood that noble oak, my Talking Friend and ancient chronicler.

This good old man departed full of years—fourscore, I think—and I remember well his hearty laugh and undisguised freedom of speech; for he was one who never mingled with the English tongue either Latinisms or French—in truth, other than plain Saxon entered not into his vocabulary. He called 'a spade a spade,' and 'a kettle but a kettle,' and used other terms also, when excited, which are now relegated and banished, and to be found only in Grose and other dictionaries of the vulgar tongue.

During all the years of high prices, a bushel of corn was never sold off the farm he cultivated, and his labourers and their families never knew, to their cost, what the 'dear loaf' meant. Allusion is made to this in 'The Last of the Old Squires,' where it is said 'the good old man might have taken rank with the Dalmatian 'Gens Anicia,' who at Rome, in A.D. 717, got the name of *à Frangipanibus*. The Tiber at that time overflowed its banks, and the people were rescued from the flood in the boats of Flavius Anicius, 'who added,' says Mr. Wingfield in his 'Tour in Dalmatia, Albania, and

Montenegro,' 'to his work of beneficence by distributing bread among the sufferers.'

Nothing could surpass the simplicity of his habits, and he served his generation well in his humble position. Chaucer's words in the Wife of Bath's Tale were very applicable to him:

> Look who that is most vertuous alway,
> Pride and pert, and most extendeth age,
> To do the gentil dedes that he can.
> Tak him for the grettest gentleman,
> Crist wol we clayme of him our gentillesse
> Nought of our eldres for her old richesse.

Such men of ancient virtue and simplicity are scarce now. And an old Shrewsbury boy called to mind the words of Demea in the play :—

> Homo amicus nobis jam inde a puero. Dî boni !
> Næ illiusmodi jam nobis magna civium
> Penuria est ; homo antiqua virtute ac fide,
> Haud cito mali quid ortum ex hoc sit publice.
> Quam gaudeo ubi etiam hujus generis reliquias
> Restare video. Ah, vivere etiam nunc libet.
> Opperiar hominem hic, ut salutem et conloquar.

Richard de la Wycke, some time Bishop of Chichester, but born in our adjoining county of Worcester, was not more ready to feed the poor than old Henry Warter, of the Upper House, and the numbers that he was said to have fed in a time of scarcity at Ferring by miracle were not more, probably, than this good old man fed without one, in the largeness of his heart and for Christian charity's sake. And my Talking Friend reminded me once more how all the road from Jack Crane's home was thronged by the women from all the country round, who came 'a bidding,' and how all the five-shilling parcels of pence, amounting to many pounds, and which had been collected for the day by the old millers Cross and Pickering were not sufficient to supply all comers with a little. I had often witnessed this ancient custom of profuse largesse, and although indiscriminate charity rarely does good to those on whom it is lavished, it is better than gripple close-fistedness, and softens the giver's heart.

> A wretched soul, bruised with adversity,
> We bid be quiet when we hear its cry ;

But were we burdened with like weight of pain,
As much or more, we should ourselves complain.

Having referred to the begging system on St. Thomas' Day, I must not forget to add that several *protégés* of the old housekeeper Nancy used to bring peck-bags with them, which were filled with corn, evidently giving rise to the term 'going a corning,' used in the neighbouring county of Warwick, the commoner terms a going 'a bidding,' or 'a gowing,' and in Herefordshire 'going a mumping.'

And I bethought me of Herrick's 'Lar's Portion and the Poet's Part':

At my homely country-seat,
I have there a little wheat,
Which I worke to meale and make
Therewithal a holy cake;
Part of which I give to Larr,
Part is my peculiar.

In Roman days my Talking Friend would have been as one of the heroes from his ancient position and standing. 'Our Lady of the Oke' at Islington was not better known in bluff Henry VIII.'s days.

But it was not only in the valley of the Rea that death was busy, and among the poor there, or amongst those of middle rank, like the good old man just mentioned, but in our palaces too:—

Pallida Mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres.

On January 23 the Duke of Kent died at Sidmouth, or rather in a Devonshire house called Woolbrooke Glen, hard by. His Royal Highness was only in his fifty-third year. The Duchess, as we all know, was the sister of that faithful brother Leopold. On the death of her father our gracious Queen Victoria was only eight months old. He was buried at Windsor on February 13.

Scarce a week more, and the nation sustained a still greater loss—if loss it should be called—in the death of its aged King, George III. He departed this troublesome life at thirty-five minutes past eight o'clock on the evening of January 29, having arrived at the age of eighty-one years and

nearly eight months—the first of the long line of English kings who died at Windsor Castle, says Mr. Charles Knight, in his 'Passages of a Working Man's Life.' Very simple were the words of Lord Eldon to Mrs. H. Ridley, January 31: 'I have lost the master whom I have long served, and whom I have most affectionately loved.'

It must have been a solemn sound that, on what Shakespeare somewhere calls 'the heavy middle of the night,' when at twelve o'clock the tolling of the great bell of St. Paul's, followed by those of Westminster, St. Margaret's, and of all the other bells of the vast metropolis 'announced to its inhabitants that the afflicted monarch who had ruled over them for sixty years had ceased to exist'; a faithful, upright, honest man, of whom, could he have had his wishes, it might have been said, as of Nerva, or Nerva Trajanus, as called by adoption—

Recta fides, hilaris clementia, cauta potestas
Jam redeunt; longi terga dedere metus.

On Tuesday, February 15—to use the term of the day—he lay in state, and on the night of the 16th he was buried in St. George's Chapel.

REX ULTIMUS ILLE BONORUM!

In what is a loyal history like this I am not called upon to draw the character of the departed monarch, whose departure I so well remember, even as though it were to-day. Enough to say that, notwithstanding the disadvantage of education, George III. had good, sound, common sense, of which Voltaire said after many others, 'Le sens commun n'est pas si commun,' and this helped him on marvellously well, so that in his communications with his several ministers he held his own, and was neither imposed upon by an English fallacy, nor by Scotch metaphysics, nor by the plausible forms of speech in the mouth of an Irish demagogue. The fact is, if his early studies were contracted, throughout life he studied man, and was quick at checkmating any intrigue. He had nothing in common with a Louis XIV. of France, and of kingcraft, such as James I. trusted in, he knew simply nothing, for he was a king at heart. Perhaps his reply to the

American Minister when accredited to the Court of St. James, entirely showed the man: 'I was the last to assent to the independence of the United States; henceforth I shall be the last to call it in question.'

Writers on different sides love to expatiate on the King's obstinacy or on certain little rifts in his character. It is not necessary to balance evidence here—it is more comfortable to say that as long as his senses were retained to him he was one like to the good centurion—'A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.' Detract as any may from the simplicity of his character, this, at least, must be conceived. After all, as Goethe said in his *Geheimnisse*, or Secrets—

Das ganze Lied, es kann doch niemand kennen.

No man can know the whole song; no man can know the whole secret of his troubled life, than whom none could have said more feelingly—

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

On January 31 the Regent was proclaimed George IV., but though king, he was reminded that he was mortal by a severe inflammation of the lungs. Happily the violent symptoms yielded to medical treatment and disappeared, and after nine days he was pronounced to be convalescent, but weak, and altogether unequal to exertion. And my Talking Friend fell a moralising, and he said, as his aged boughs quivered with the old emotion, 'How many kings, and how many lines of kings, have my venerable father and myself seen pass away! Saxon kings and Danish kings, and Norman kings, the lines of Lancaster and York, Plantagenets and Tudors, Jameses and Charleses, Nassaus and Guelphs, who, albeit some of them were rough as my old wrinkled and gnarled bark, were yet always better than the Ghibellines. To which he added pithily: 'The old statesman, Sir Robert Walpole said, "All men have their price," and so had we in days gone by,' humorously quoting old Tredethic as his authority, who used to say, referring to the laws of Howel Dhu, that time was when 'an oak tree was worth 60*d.*, and so like-

wise was a mistletoe branch growing on it' ; and what might that be reckoned at as money was then, and money is now?

Upon which he turned, as it were, the whole substance of his trunk upon me, and said : 'A fine old man, some forty years ago, whose youth was spent in a foreign land, visited the old homestead, and took many walks and drives with "The Last of the Old Squires" ; and I heard him say how great an admirer he was of old oak trees, at the same time looking me full in the face, and I longed to tell him how much finer I was once, in the gala days of my youth. Amongst other oaks I heard him mention the Yardley oak, and I caught at the name, though I knew that its locality was nowhere in these parts, because the Yardleys of Plaley always passed down this road on their way to Shrewsbury. On one occasion he repeated the lines which follow, and his companion listened to the intonation of his solemn voice with delight and, sooth to say, on "THE FAITH OF HEART OF OAK," so did I. Since then I have been told that he wrote them himself at the end of the last century. I quite recollect his grey hair floating over his shoulders, for, as you say, it—

Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind.'

The lines alluded to were 'The Oak of our Fathers,' written at Westbury, near Bristol, in the year 1798.

It must be confessed that there was something ominous, as the old people in the valley said, on the opening of this reign, for February 23 was the day intended for the murder of the Ministry by the Cato Street conspirators, but happily the plot was discovered.

On the 28th of the month Parliament was prorogued and dissolved, the King's speech being delivered by the Lord Chancellor. The new Parliament was opened on April 27 by his Majesty in person. Old Samuel, the faithful servant of Captain Witte, of Hanwood Bank, said in his oracular way that he had lived through the last reign and had seen many changes, and he wished George IV. might make as good a king as his father had done. On the return of his 'young master,' as he called him, he came and lived with him, glad that he had escaped the dangers of the many naval fights

which he was engaged in, including the Battle of the Nile. The old man had saved money and was well-to-do. When he was unable to look to his master's affairs any more, he returned to Lydles Hayes, where he was bred and born, and there he was buried, respected by all for his uprightness of conduct, though smiled at for his superstitions. Still, as Ford said in 'The Lover's Melancholy'—

> There was pith
> In his untoward plainness.

It was on May 1 that Thistlewood and his accomplices in the Cato Street conspiracy—a street by the Edgware Road, since called Homer Street—were executed for murder and treason. Their place of rendezvous was a loft over a stable (in the valley of the Rea it would have been called a 'talent'), only accessible by a ladder, belonging to General Watson. Their plan or intent was to murder the Ministry, who were to dine on February 23 at Lord Harrowby's, 39 Grosvenor Square, Thistlewood savagely saying, 'It will be a rare haul to murder them all together.' He was a wild, intemperate man, originally a subaltern in the militia and afterwards in a regiment of the line stationed in the West Indies. Disappointment, no doubt, roused his ferocious passions, and it is thought that he was chiefly incensed against Lords Sidmouth and Castlereagh, to the former of whom he had sent a challenge.

The conspirators met, on the evening mentioned, to the number of twenty-four or twenty-five; they were confused by carriages at the Archbishop of York's dinner party that same day, but were betrayed in their haunt in Cato Street by Edwards, one of their number. It may be added here that Thistlewood was the last person sent to the Tower, and that he and his fellow-conspirators—Ings, a butcher, Tidd and Brunt, shoemakers, and a man of colour named Davidson—were the first buried in the cemetery within the walls of Newgate.

It was the talk of the valley of the Rea in those days; and on market days, specially on Saturdays, knots of people used to gather under the Old Oak's shade and tell their tale. I well remember how the subject was dwelt on at the old

homestead, and in after-years I used constantly to meet Sir Frederick Rowe, the old Bow Street officer, who was so influential in the capture of the conspirators. He was exceedingly amused one day at seeing me cross into a semi-gipsy cabin on the roadside, near Cote (a hamlet of this parish attached to Durrington), and with the eye of an old police-officer watched my proceedings, which were simple enough. A child had been born in it, and I was sent for to baptize it, at once offering to remove the woman and her babe to the public down below ; an offer which she very civilly declined, saying that 'all her children had been born on the roadside, and it hardened them.' The party remained there for about a fortnight, were very grateful for the little I was enabled to do for them, and so passed on, the man observing very quietly, 'I shall not forget you, sir.' Neither did he, for the summer following he brought me a dozen small round baskets, such as are used in Covent Garden in the strawberry season ; nor could he be persuaded to receive any remuneration. Basket-making and chair-bottoming were his ostensible trade. I have never seen the parties since. After all, what a Christian privilege it is to be represented as—

> Standing as did old Hospitalitie,
> With ready arms to succour any needes.

But to return to the summary of the year. On May 10 was held the great levée, which Lord Eldon describes as 'more crowded than any that I remember, except that upon the late King's recovery in 1788, and upon his escape when he was shot at at the playhouse, and when Margaret Nicholson was pleased to try and murder him.'

But troublous times were coming, and the political and moral atmosphere was lowering, and good men prayed thoughtfully that 'Divine Providence would vouchsafe to check the motion of that malevolent planet which hath so long lower'd upon poor England, and send us better days.' And well do I remember those days—the dissatisfaction and the restlessness of the people generally. The pleasant Saturday nights at the 'Cock' and at the 'Lea Cross' were more, and the talk of those who frequented the well-known

taps was moody and seditious, and the old Doctor and John Diggory, both of them wags and humourists, as they drank (the old term for smoking) their tobacco with Dikky Tummas unmixed, were scarcely called upon to sing the old stave (one wonders where they got it from) which had so long delighted the company:—

The Indian weed, withered quite, &c.

As is well known, independent of other causes for dissatisfaction, the treatment of the Queen by George IV. aroused the passions of the people. The matter can only be alluded to summarily in these concluding pages, but the talk of the valley made an impression upon a boy like myself. The few following desultory sentences must be sufficient:—

On June 6 the Queen arrived in London, in an open carriage, with Alderman Sir Matthew Wood and Lady Anne Hamilton. She went to his house in South Audley Street, and they showed themselves on the balcony. Lord Eldon, writing again to his daughter, called it 'a mass of difficulties.' On June 15 a conference on the Queen's matters took place between the Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh on the one side, and Mr. Brougham and Mr. Denman on the other. It resulted, however, in nothing, and on the 19th all negotiations were hopelessly given up.

On July 5, perhaps not wisely, a Bill of Pains and Penalties was introduced by Lord Liverpool, in which the Queen is accused 'of having carried on a criminal intercourse with a menial of her own named Bergami, and the Bill proposed to enact that she should therefore be degraded from the title and station of Queen and her marriage annulled.' Plenty of distressing evidence was brought forward, and the morals of all modest people were troubled, and eventually the charges, though believed in, fell to the ground. It was deemed wiser not to rake in the kennel of dirt and filthy pollution.

After a while came on the wretched woman's trial—August 17—but her defence in the House of Lords was not opened by Mr. Brougham till October 3; and it was not till November 6 that the House divided on the second reading of

the Bill, on which occasion the majority was but twenty-eight. On the third reading on the 10th it was reduced to nine, on which occasion Lord Liverpool did not think it advisable to press the matter further. Looking back to the whole affair it was sad and melancholy; and the ballads of the Seven Dials, to say nothing of Theodore Hook's pasquinades, were not such as to still the minds of an irritated populace.

No doubt Walter Savage Landor would have said a word in favour of the Queen if he could, but from his residence where she resided abroad he could not do so, as may be seen from his letters. Perhaps what Mr. Timbs writes in his 'Vagaries of Brandenburg House' may not unfairly be transcribed here: 'That Caroline of Brunswick was no better than she should be, few sane men can doubt nowadays; that George IV. was a gross, sensual, selfish man seems equally acknowledged; but, to the admirers of Queen Caroline forty years since, the most hideous example of cruelty, vice, and depravity that ever lived.' Looking any way to the wretched woman, her lot must have been—

Close, groping grief, and anguish of the soul.

Poor, wretched soul! Stricken with adversity, and all but an exile, she did not long survive this public and ill-judged exposure, but died on August 7, 1821. The immediate cause of her death was a sudden illness with which she was seized when at the theatre, Drury Lane; the remote one, no doubt, her disappointment at being refused admittance at every door into Westminster Abbey at the coronation on July 19. The place of her death was Brandenburg House, at Hammersmith, at the comparatively early age of fifty-four.

It does not belong to these pages to tell of the disturbances that occurred at her removal for burial—not in England but in Brunswick—or of the inscription she willed to be inscribed on her coffin: 'Here lies Caroline of Brunswick, the injured Queen of England.' It is an old, sad story, and discreditable to all concerned in it. The persons will not bear the comparison, but one cannot but recollect the old Roman's words:—

Ingrata patria, ne quidem ossa mea habebis.

As for the coronation of George IV., above referred to, it was not likely to pass off in the old county of Shropshire or in the valley of the Rea without due honour. It would have been a slur on the loyalty of an ancient people. The consequence was there were rejoicings in the old town and in all the neighbourhood. The people, as a whole, cared little, it is probable, about the Prince Regent or of his antecedents, though the Welshmen, as they passed under the Old Oak, used to tell how he had planted an oakling on the border when on a visit at Wynnstay; and how, when he spoke of the 'Prince *in* Wales,' Sir Watkins good-humouredly retorted: 'Welcome, welcome, your Royal Highness Prince *of* Wales.' With his natural good humour the Prince called to mind the story of Busby and Charles II. at Westminster, and told how his old tutor, Cyril Jackson, Dean of Christ Church, always kept on his cap in hall.

For myself I well recollect the evening of July 19. Two old squires then lived in the valley, the one at Cruckton, the other at the old homestead at Cruck Meole, called the 'Last of the Old Squires,' being the survivor of his neighbour. It was a holiday—that day of the coronation—for their men and they had all a good dinner, and plenty of Shropshire ale, and a bottle of wine each to top up with. From the opposite sides of the stream which divided the properties the shouts of the men were heard till midnight—boisterous mirth, no doubt, but such were the times. And the two old squires were well pleased in giving pleasure to others.

> Vaguely here
> Through the dim mists that crowd the atmosphere,
> They drew the outlines of weird figures cast
> In shadow on the background of the past.

For half an hour before the men of Meole parted for the night, they joined hands and danced round a grand old green nonpareil tree, near the weir—the finest of the kind I ever recollect, with an upright stem and with a round overshadowing head, like a canopy. I never recollect it missing to bear. Like many reminiscences of my boyhood it is gone now. I did not ask old William Overton or Dick Glover then why

they had fixed upon an apple tree for their midnight dance, but I have since asked myself, 'Had it anything to do with the old custom of apple-howling in the neighbouring apple district of Hereford?' And then I bethought me of divers superstitions. How, for instance, our country people, who had none of the 'rather ripes' of the south of England, formerly considered it unlucky to gather apples before St. Swithin had christened them; and how the 'blessing of new apples' was so common a custom on St. James's Day—July 25—as to have a form of prayer in the well-known Breviary of Sarum, in which, in the days gone by, births and deaths were sometimes inserted, as my seldom-seen friend, Mr. Proctor, of Whitton, Norfolk, once pointed out to me in his magnificent copy. He has made good use of it, and his book on the Common Prayer is one of the very best we have.

The reader of Herrick's 'Hesperides' will recollect, or can refer to, these lines, which refer to the 'howling of the apple trees':—

> Wassaile the trees that they may beare
> You many a plum and many a peare;
> For more or less fruits they will bring
> As you do give them wassailing.

The old custom still exists, not only in Hereford, but in Devon and Sussex. In the latter county is Horsted Keynes, of which my lamented friend, the Rev. William Plucknett, was many years rector, and it was one of the pleasant amusements of the boys of the parish to keep it up, who always claimed their *backshish*. It has been paid even out of the Church rates, as the Sparrow Club made their payments long ago. On December 26, 1669–70, the Rev. Giles Moore, who was rector of Horsted Keynes from 1655 to 1679, 'gave the howling boys 6*d*.' In the 'Sussex Archæological Collections' is the note following, in which my quotation from Herrick is anticipated: 'On New Year's Eve it was, and still continues to be, the custom to wassail the orchards. At Horsted Keynes and elsewhere the ceremony retains the name of "apple howling." A troop of boys visit the different orchards, and encircling the apple trees'—mark the coincidence at the old homestead—'they repeat the following words:—

Stand fast, root, bear well, top,
Pray the God send us a good handling crop.
Every twig, apples big ;
Every bough, apples enow ;
Hats full, caps full,
Full quarters, sacks full.

Then they shout in chorus, one of the boys accompanying them upon the cow's horn. During this ceremony they rap the trees with their sticks.'

I referred to my Talking Friend—the dear old chronicler of the Rea—to know whether he recollected any such custom hereabouts, but he shook his leaves in the negative, but added that he himself had often been rapped with sticks and the whalebone whips of carters and waggoners, as they passed him by, and that great gad-nails had been driven into trees by mischievous boys, and staples whereon to hang great swinging gates—indeed he wondered that any life was left in him, and had it not been for his 'heart of oak' he must have perished long ago. And I thought of Chaucer's lines :—

Lo, the oak, that hath so long norisschynge
Fro time that it ginneth first to sprynge,
And hath so long a lyf, as ye maye see,
Yet atte laste worsted is the tree.

In those days all the orchards in the valley were much improved, owing to the stir which Mr. Knight, of Downton Castle, had made by his horticultural experiments, before alluded to. In later days 'The Last of the Old Squires,' and J. C. Wood, of the Marsh, one of the best horticulturists in the neighbourhood, were doubtful about many, even most, of his fruits, though they always admitted the Downton pippin, raised from the old golden pippin, to be a great success. I believe the Ribston pippin was raised from the old 'Margil,' the best apple I ever remember, but there was no renovating it—the finest, healthiest shoot grafted on the healthiest stock would cumber in a year or two.

It was about this time, if my memory serves me, that I first saw the tomato grown in a pit, or on the sunny side of one. Even after this, though introduced from Peru as early as 1596, it was not for long a great marketable commodity

in Covent Garden, and I am told was introduced there by The McIntosh. The botanical name was *Lycopersicum esculentum.* Since then it has become a great favourite, though I suppose 'love apple,' the 'lieber Apfel' of the Germans, is of old standing. So fond are the Portuguese of it, dressed plainly with roast meat, that they have a proverb to this intent, 'When the tomato is ripe send away your casks.' Since the days I am now speaking of we have run it up walls, and rodded it as we do pears. The most rapid growth I ever read of the plant was at Magdala.

The most rapid spread of any plant I ever recollect in the valley was that of the musk plant—exceeding that of the American pond-weed, which is threatening our canals. When I left the valley of the Rea, for a four years' residence at Copenhagen, my lamented mother had a single plant in a pot ; when I returned every cottager had one in the window, and growing in profuse luxuriance.

As I write these lines I have a letter from one of my oldest friends, Sarah Harley, who will well recollect the growth of the musk plant. She says: 'One of my sister's sons is in the far west of America—in Minnesota—from whose good wife I had a letter the other day. She writes in ecstasies of the lovely flowers of the prairies, and says the prairie-fowl come and feed close to their house door.' In her early days she was the belle of Shrewsbury, in her later ones she has been at the head of the charities and schools in the parish of St. Chad's. I write this, as these pages will never be published in her lifetime or mine. It is a tribute to her worth.

In these days my faithful chronicler would fain speak of the antiquity of his tribe, and requested me to tell him of any I knew of, as he was growing old, and it would be pleasing to him to hear that oaks had served their generation well. And so I cudgelled my brains, and bethought me of the Fairlop oak, the oaks of Sherwood Forest, the oaks of Pelion, and the old oak of Magdalen College, Oxford, for of the Shelton oak, hard by, before mentioned, he knew everything.

And having given my time-honoured chronicler the history of these oaks, omitting scores of others, I repeated, as it

were to myself, Keble's lines on the oak in the 'Lyra Innocentium.' But he quickly caught the words, being an oak of ready apprehension, and was vastly pleased with them, adding, with a quiver of his ancient boughs, 'No wonder that oaks have been used as boundaries from St. Augustine's days and earlier, for the oak is a tree both loyal and just, like the heathen TERMINUS you have often mentioned.'

THE OAK.

Come, take a woodland walk with me,
And mark the rugged old oak tree,
How steadily his arm he flings
Where from the bank the fresh rill springs
And points the water's silent way
Down the wild maze of reed and spray;
Two furlongs on they glide unseen,
Known only by the loveliest green.

There stands he, in each time and tide,
The new-born streamlets guard and guide
To him spring shower and summer sun,
Brown autumn, winter's sleet are one.
But firmest in the bleakest hour,
He holds his root in faith and power,
The splintered bark his girdle stern,
His robe grey moss and mountain fern.

Mark'st thou in him no token true
Of Heaven's own priests, both old and new;
In penitential garb austere
Fixed in the world, from year to year,
The lessons of stern love to teach,
To penitents and children preach;
Bold words and eager glances stay
And gently level JESU'S way.

With this I thought my Talking Friend would be satisfied. But far from it. His curiosity, or some better feeling, was now excited, and he said, 'I heard your Uncle John say, when you were an infant (he died, you will recollect, in the year of his proctorship in Cambridge), that the oak was still to be found in Palestine, though many confounded it with the terebinth.'

And I was taken aback; for, albeit I knew the depth of his roots from my Virgil, I thought surely he must be getting

out of his depth. But not a bit of it, for he had stored up well what he had heard in length of years, and he was as good a 'poser' as any examiner from Winchester. The consequence was that I was obliged to think of what I had read, as well in the Bible and other ancient books as in those modern ones of travel.

In a very recent volume, 'The Rob Roy on the Jordan,' and speaking of its Dan source, I read, 'A splendid terebinth and a not less splendid oak droop over this little stream,' which, I suppose, Burckhardt did not see, as he only mentions oaks of *low stature* in the hills and plains near the sources of the Jordan. The reader will find him quoted to this purpose in Kitto's 'Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature' under the word 'ALLON,' which is the 'oak.' The Hebrew name for the terebinth tree is 'ALAH.' On the confusion of these two not dissimilar words the reader may turn to Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' where he will read that although there are mighty oaks still in Lebanon, north of the Cedar Valley, 'yet over a great part of the country the oaks of Palestine are at present mere bushes'—so corroborating Burckhardt. In the notice of the 'oak' in Smith special reference is made to Dr. Hooker's 'Paper on the Oaks of Palestine' in the Linnæan Society's Publications, 1861.

The oaks of Bashan are coupled by Isaiah with the cedars of Lebanon (see ii. 12, 13). Of them says Ezekiel, the mariners of Tyre made their oars (see xxvii. 6). In answer to the question, 'Where are the mountains and oaks of Bashan which are celebrated in the Word of God?' Pester replies: 'There is one whole mountain range comprehended within the borders of Bashan, which for the beauty of its scenery, the richness of its pastures, and the extent of its oak forests is not surpassed in this land, and to the present day it retains the ancient name, being called *Ard-el Batharych*, 'the country of Bataran, or Bashan.' May not these be the 'hills of Bashan' and may not the forests that clothe them be the representatives of the 'oaks of Bashan'?

More recently it has been said that the Bashan oak is the *Quercus Aegilops*. If so, this is the oak now called the Valonia oak, the acorns of which, to the amount of 150,000 cwt., are

said to be imported annually to this country for the use of the tanners. It is of this oak that Mr. Tozer speaks in his 'Researches in the Highlands of Turkey' as growing on the Plain of Troy: 'The principal vegetation here, as in all the more level parts of the surrounding district, is the Valonia oak (the ancient Βάλανος), the bark of the acorn of which is used in tanning, and is exported from hence in considerable quantities.'

I could not quote this passage, because the book was published fifty years after; but as I alluded to the use of foreign material by our tanners—though it had not reached the tanyards at Pontesford—there was a sort of scornful shake amid my old friend's boughs and leaves, and something like a hoarse voice which said, 'Could they get true oak bark enough they would never use the barks of Valonias!' How would he have been pleased could I have told him what Sir William Napier wrote of Walter Savage Landor: 'He is an oak with many gnarled branches and queer excrescences, but always an oak, and one that will be admired for ages.'

And I could not but call to mind Spenser's lines on the aged oak from the Februarie of his 'Shepheard's Calendar:'—

> There grewe an aged tree on the greene,
> A goodly oake sometime had it bene,
> With armes ful stronge and largely displayed,
> But of their leaves they were disarayede;
> The body bigge, and mightily pight,
> Thoroughly rooted, and of wonderous hight;
> Whilome hadde bene the kinge of the fielde,
> And mochell mast to the husbande did yielde,
> And with his nuts had larded many swine;
> But now the graye mosse marred his rine,
> His bared boughes were beaten with stormes,
> His toppe was balde, and wasted with wormes,
> His honour decayed, his branches sere.
> Harde by his side grew a bragging Brere &c.

For the rest, so well worth reading, I must refer to the 'Calendar' itself; and no lover of poesy, as Sir Philip Sidney was, to whom it is addressed and dedicated—so worthy of it—will

> Snebbe the good oake, for he was old.

For more general information on 'the strong tree'—I suppose the Hebrew name to be derived from a root which implies this—I must refer to Tristram's 'Land of Israel: a Journal of Travels in Palestine,' to Robinson's 'Biblical Researches,' and to Dean Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' out of which, taken together, sufficient may be picked.

For the sake of old Shrewsbury boys—who will all so well recollect the Shelton oak, and the ilex on the banks of the Severn—as well as for the satisfaction of my time-honoured chronicler, I give the extracts following; and, in truth, no reader of his Bible but must often think of the 'strong tree'—the 'ALLAN' or the 'ALAH,' so often mentioned there. Nay, more, in our sorrows we have often called to mind the 'ALLON-BACHUTH' of Beth-el, where Rebekah's nurse was buried. In the simple words of the Book of Genesis, 'But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an oak: and the name of it was called ALLON-BACHUTH'—i.e. the oak of weeping.

Speaking of Hebron, Mr. Tristram says:—

'We strolled about a mile and a half from the city to visit the so-called Abraham's oak, as representative or descendant of the famed oak of Mamre, which was a terebinth (*Pistacia terebintha*), but a mere substitute, and in a different direction from Hebron, west instead of north, a noble holm oak, the forest tree in Southern Palestine, of the species *Quercus pseudo-coccifera*, Desf. (Arabice "Scindiân"). It was not until we had been long wandering in Northern Galilee that we met with an oak-tree to surpass this one in size. The tree is sound, measuring over twenty-two feet in circumference, and stands close under the vineyards in a grassy field, with some of its descendants not very far off, and with a fine old well of sweet water just behind it. Under its shade, in quiet seclusion, we sat and spent our Sunday afternoon in reading the history of Abraham, and the promises of blessing through him to all nations, pledged to him in these valleys near six thousand years ago, and fulfilled now to ourselves.'

Robinson's account precedes this in time, but it is very interesting:—

'The venerable oak (Scindiân) to which we now come is a

splendid tree; we hardly saw another like it in all Palestine, certainly not on this side of the plain of Esdraelon. Indeed, large trees are very rare in this quarter of the country. The trunk of this tree measures twenty-two and a half feet around the lower part. It separates almost immediately into three large boughs or trunks, and one of these again, higher up, into two. The branches extend from the trunk in one direction forty-nine feet, their whole diameter in the same direction being eighty-nine feet, and in the other at right angles eighty-three and half feet. The tree is in a thrifty [i.e. thriving] state, and the trunk sound. It stands alone in the midst of the field; the ground beneath is covered with grass and clean; there is a well with water near by; so that a more beautiful spot for recreation could hardly be found.

'I am not sure if this is the tree which Sir John Maundeville saw near Hebron, of which he relates that it was green in Abraham's days, but dried up at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, like all the other trees then in the world. It seems to be mentioned by Belon in the sixteenth century as a terebinth; it is described as such by writers of the following century. But this is not a terebinth (Buton); nor is there any large tree of that species in the vicinity of Hebron. Least of all can this be either the tree of Abraham or its successor, for his terebinth probably stood more towards Jerusalem, and had already disappeared in the days of Jerome.'

Never having visited the Holy Land, I know not if our British oak—like my fruitful and time-honoured chronicler—exists there. I must inquire of such friends as are likely to have noticed this. From what I have read in travels I rather pick up that the oak of Palestine, at least, is the ilex, and that the terebinth is one sort of this species, both evergreens. Dean Stanley says, speaking of the oak and terebinth, or turpentine tree: 'The trees are different in kind, but their general appearance is so similar, as well as the name which the Hebrews (doubtless from this similarity) applied to both, that they may both be considered together'; to which he adds in the note: 'They are once expressly distinguished as the "terebinth" (Elah) and the "oak" (Allon) (Isaiah vi. 13). But, on the other hand, they are also confounded; the

same tree apparently, which is called "*Elah*" in Joshua xxiv. 26, being called *Allon* in Genesis xxxv. 4.'

My Talking Friend was highly satisfied with all this mingled yarn of information, and he said that an old sailor mentioned in an early part of this history had spoken of the great trees he had seen in the New World—alluding, no doubt, to the trees of North and South America—but he added that none had the grandeur of our oak, though the substance of some trees was hard as iron. At that time the vast 'Wellingtonias' of Vancouver's Island and Columbia were unknown. A sailor of more recent years—my parishioner, Will Winton—who sent me all his letters, told how they used to lodge and dine in the holes the Indians had burnt in their trunks, and that their height and girth were so great that no one who had not seen them would give credit for what he wrote. But he added—as was natural for a ship's carpenter—'the wood was poor, pithy stuff, and unfit for ship use.'

It was on one occasion when we were speaking of the great age of many grand oaks in the county of Shropshire that my aged chronicler pithily put in, 'The pedigree of an oak is better than that of most families; and could they tell their own tale, as I have been gifted to tell that of my father's and my own to you, local history would be the gainer.' And I could not but admit the truth; but, looking to the old homestead, I rather called to mind the private history of the valley of the Rea, and of the many changes even I had seen there in the space of sixty-four years.

When my time-honoured friend spoke of the oak's pedigree I might have tickled his vanity—he would have felt it through his wrinkled and crusted bark of centuries—by telling him how good old John Guillim, some time pursuivant-at-arms, in speaking of trees in heraldries, says: 'The oake is the strongest sort of trees, and therefore may best challenge the first place.' Nor would he have been less pleased—for he was heart of oak always—with the words which follow: 'A true, generous mind will endeavour that for his *self-virtues* he may be esteemed, and not insist only upon the fame and merits of his *progenitors*, the praise whereof is due to them, and not to him.

Nam genus, et proavos, et quæ non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voco.

And so it cannot be said there is nothing about 'oaks' in this chapter, which reminds me of the two shortest chapters in Horrebow's 'Natural History of Iceland,' chapter xlii.: 'There are no owls of any kind in the whole island,' which I saw misquoted the other day in some paper. Southey, always accurate, quoted it aright in his 'Vindiciæ Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ.' Possibly, however, the allusion was to chapter lxxii. concerning snakes: 'No snakes of any kind are to be met with throughout the whole island.'

CONCLUSION OF THE OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK.

There is no change upon the scene,
My native plain is gaily green,
Yon oak still braves the wintry air,
The raven is not silent there;
Beneath my foot the simple rill
Flows on in noisy wildness still.
Nature hath suffered no decay;
Her lordly children, where are they—
Friends of my pure and sinless age,
The good, the jocund, and the sage,
Gone is the light your kindness shed,
In silence have ye changed or fled,
Ye and your dwellings! Yet I hear
Your well-known voices in mine ear,
And see your faces beaming round,
Like magic shades on haunted ground.
Hark! as they murmur down the dell,
A lingering tale those voices tell;
And while they flit in vacant air
A beauteous smile those faces wear.
Alas! I turn my dreaming eyes,
The lovely vision fades and flies;
The tale is done,
The smile is gone,
I am a stranger—and alone!

'I am drawing apace toward my long home, and must shortly appear before the high and everlasting Judge, and therefore I desire to lose no time, but to ply all I can the business God hath set me about for the short remainder of

these few and last days, that by the mercies of God I may finish my career with joy, and give up that last and great account with favour and comfort in the name of Jesus Christ. ROBERT BOLLON, Epist. ded. to 'A right Comforting an Afflicted Conscience,' vol. ii. 4to, 1640, a. 3.

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